



# THE OXFORD GUIDE TO CAREERS **2026**

THE CAREERS  
SERVICE AND  
YOUR YEAR AHEAD

DEVELOPING  
YOUR CAREER  
IDEAS

GAINING EXPERIENCE  
AND DEVELOPING  
SKILLS

APPLICATION  
ESSENTIALS

SECTOR  
BRIEFINGS



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# Welcome

Welcome to the annual Oxford Careers Guide – or, since this is Oxford, this is your *vade mecum* (Latin: go with me) for all things to do with your career. Use this to start thinking about your choices, to explore options, and to make applications.

This year, it looks like the job market will be more difficult than the last couple of post-pandemic years when employers recruited strongly to catch up with the “lost” year. Which means that competition will be a bit tougher. This year will also see an increased use of AI by both applicants and recruiters – something else to think about – and that we discuss on the web site.

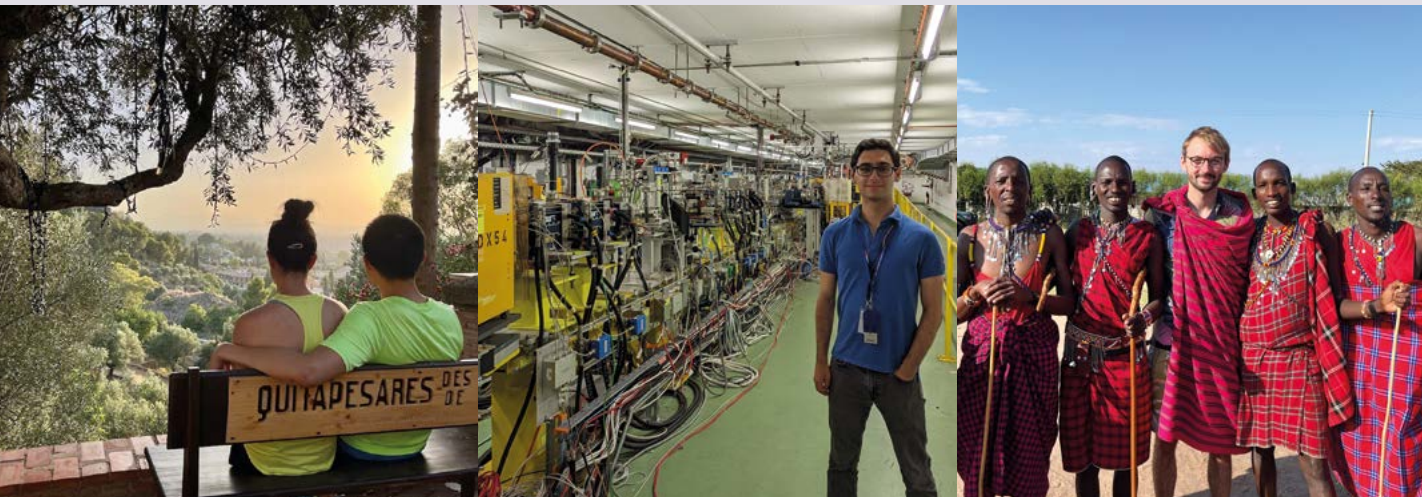
All of which means that demonstrating “employability” skills will be more important than before, and having a Plan B (and C perhaps) will be valuable. The Careers Service can help with all this: while you learn many employability skills in your academic curriculum, you can supplement these (e.g., with teamwork, business awareness and leadership) and gain great experience through many of our programmes, as well of course as having confidential 1:1s on any topic with a Careers Adviser.

We’ve written this Guide for any and every Oxford undergraduate or postgraduate, artist or scientist, who each usually have one of three questions:

- Where do I start?
- How do I gain more skills to improve my chances (especially in this time of change)?
- Where do I find jobs and internships?

You’ll find answers to these questions, and many more in this Guide: from ‘How do I write a winning CV?’ to ‘What does it take to be a solicitor?’ and from ‘How do I get experience





in the museum and heritage sector?’ to ‘How do I meet a careers adviser for a 1:1 meeting?’.

This Guide is just one of the many free services you can access from the University Careers Service. Other services you can use include:

- To get started:
  - Book a confidential 1:1 (there are almost 7,000 online and IRL every year).
  - Visit in-person careers fairs (at least eight are held each year).
  - Meet some employers in person and online.
  - Arrange to have some information interviews with alumni.
  - Log onto or attend one of the many ‘Introduction to...’ talks we run.
- To gain more skills:
  - Take part in the Oxford Strategy Challenge.
  - Get work experience through an Oxford-exclusive summer or micro-internship.
  - Attend Insight into Teaching/Medicine/Business/Publishing/Academia/Pharma/Creative writing programmes.
- To find jobs and internships:
  - Log onto CareerConnect.
  - Sign up for automatic alerts about new jobs in your industries of choice.
  - Connect with the Internship Office to explore our Summer Internship Programme and Micro-Internship Programme.

We look forward to meeting you in person or online at our fairs and events.



## Careers events

# TERM PLANNER

From insights into a variety of employment sectors to practical skills workshops and inspiring panel discussions, we have a wide range of exciting careers events lined up each term for Oxford University students, researchers and alumni.

Check out the term planner for an overview of upcoming events and to book your place.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/term-planner](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/term-planner)

# THE OXFORD GUIDE TO CAREERS 2026

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# The Careers Service and your year ahead



[www.careers.ox.ac.uk](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk)

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● **Daily**  
**Advice appointments:** Confidential and impartial one-to-one meetings with a careers adviser held online, on the phone or in person at the Careers Service. Book in advance on CareerConnect.

● **Weekly**  
**Newsletter:** The easiest way to keep up to date during term, our newsletter hits your inbox each week with details of upcoming events and opportunities.  
**Talks and workshops:** We frequently host talks on specific career options and run skills workshops, many with invited external speakers. Most are open to all students, with some tailored to master's students, DPhil students or research staff.

● **Termly**  
**TOSCA:** Work in a team to help local organisations solve real business problems and develop your employability skills: includes consultancy training.  
**Skills sessions:** Workshops and presentations on a specific topic, such as psychometric tests or interviews, led by an employer or a careers adviser. All advertised on CareerConnect.  
**Micro-internships:** Two- to five-day voluntary, full-time work placements with a host organisation.

● **Annually**  
**Career fairs:** Meet employers and alumni to learn about and explore some of the options available. Starting early in Michaelmas term, we run nine in person fairs across the year.  
**Opportunities:** Nearly 6,000 vacancies and internships are advertised every year on CareerConnect.  
**The Summer Internship Programme:** Hundreds of work experience opportunities in many sectors and countries exclusively for Oxford students.



## CareerConnect

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/careerconnect](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/careerconnect)

Accessed with your Oxford Single Sign-on, CareerConnect is the password-protected area of the Careers Service website that provides dedicated services enabling you to:

- Book appointments.
  - Browse our calendar of events.
  - Book your place on workshops and employer-led events.
  - Search our extensive database of job vacancies and internships.
  - Access additional resources to which we subscribe on your behalf, including practice tests.
- ...and much more!





# What's next? What's first?

Most students will explore career options, including further study, alongside their studies. This guide is for everyone considering what to do at the end of their current course, and will help students who have a clear focus to sharpen their career objectives and add polish to their applications. It summarises our guidance and signposts further resources to explore options, make decisions, and work purposefully towards a successful future.

Make use of the Developing Career Ideas section of the Careers Service website to make those key first steps in your career journey, regardless of what stage you are at in your degree.

Plot your progress!



**Exploring interests and developing skills**

Career readiness grid



# Careers term by term

Every year, hundreds of organisations visit Oxford specifically to meet you – to start a conversation. However, our academic terms are NOT created equally.

## Michaelmas term

Michaelmas term is the time to talk to firms that interest you. In fact, we run six of our annual career fairs in Michaelmas, and this term will account for almost 75% of all the company presentations and company visits coordinated by the Careers Service in the whole year. At our career fairs and company presentations you can meet:

- Recent alumni working in areas you might be interested in – people who were in your shoes not so long ago.
- Recruiters who can tell you more about the firm, graduate roles and training, and the recruitment process.
- Senior managers and business leaders (many will also be Oxford alumni) who can provide a wider perspective on the organisation and graduate career trajectories.

Use the Events Calendar on CareerConnect to find company presentations and to book places on relevant workshops and skills sessions offered through the Careers Service.

## Hilary term

Finalists and graduating master's students who have made good applications should expect January and February to be busy with interviews. Continue to target new graduate programmes and seek advertised positions – you may also find attractive internships to apply for. Similarly, those targeting further study should continue to make applications to courses and funding bodies.

Hilary Term is also a key time to start seeking internship and summer opportunities. The advice above about applying for full-time positions all holds true here. Some firms that

recruit graduates only open their summer internship places to penultimate-year students, and these can lead to full-time offers for interns that do well. But also look out for other opportunities including our own Summer Internship Programme, which offers all Oxford students exclusive internship opportunities, many of them in sectors where internships can be hard to find, or overseas.

Keep abreast of the skills sessions, workshops and seminars offered at the Careers Service via the Events Calendar on CareerConnect.

Trinity term

Be sure to keep on track academically and invest enough time to do yourself justice in finals or any exams that you have.

The big graduate schemes form only a small proportion of the graduate employment market and the number of vacancies offered every month through CareerConnect remains fairly constant through the year, so there are always new opportunities. However, keep an eye open as some graduate schemes re-open this term to fill any remaining places. You can also apply to firms that have year-round rolling recruitment.

The Careers Service continues to offer workshops and careers advisers continue with confidential one-to-one discussions during Trinity and the long vacation, on Skype, telephone or virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

- Careers fairs**  
The following fairs will be run in person. See our website and CareerConnect for details.
- **Finance and Management Consultancy Fair:** Friday 10 October, Exam Schools
  - **Oxford University Careers Fair (for all sectors):** Saturday 11 October, Exam Schools
  - **Law Fair:** Saturday 11 October, Exam Schools
  - **Science, Engineering and Technology Fair:** Saturday 25 October, Exam Schools
  - **Careers in Computing Fair:** Thursday 30 October, Mathematical Institute
  - **Jobs for Mathematicians Fair:** Tuesday 18 November, Mathematical Institute

Earlier this year, we ran the Careers Conference for Researchers in Hilary term and the Summer Careers Fair in Trinity term. Dates for 2026 yet to be confirmed.

# Developing your career ideas







With hundreds of possible directions, many students find it hard to decide what they want to do after graduating, and may even find the process quite daunting. This chapter can help you:

- Make a start,
- Identify careers that might appeal to you, and
- Choose between them.

Take time to understand what you enjoy most and what helps you succeed. Combine these insights with research into your preferred options to make decisions and take action.

What is your personal pattern?

Our Career Weaver tool helps you to think about what you value most in your working environment. It provides a rich variety of short exercises to stimulate and structure your thinking and helps you to identify and describe:

- What you love.
- What you are good at.
- Why you do what you choose to do.

Use your SSO to open your personal account at [www.careerweaver.ox.ac.uk](http://www.careerweaver.ox.ac.uk) and begin to explore, define and explain your most important drivers and key values.

See our Generating Career Ideas webpage to learn more about using Career Weaver and a variety of additional tools and ideas you can use. You can also check out the How to Make a Careers Decision page for help thinking through options for your next career move.



Ethical networking

We often hear the phrase ‘it’s not what you know, it’s who you know’. This might make us a little uncomfortable, but there are many ethical reasons to network:

- To become aware of opportunities and how to access them.
- To understand what really goes on inside organisations so that you choose the right opportunities to apply for.
- To uncover the language and terminology of the organisation so that you can make your achievements sound as relevant as possible and talk like an insider to establish fit and enthusiasm.

Beyond the objectives of ethical networking, we need to approach the subject with emotional intelligence, people do not like being sold to or taken advantage of.

The key to effective networking is research. Always prepare in advance; when you are going to meet someone, look them up on LinkedIn, so you can talk their language. You should also tailor your elevator pitch to the contacts you are trying to make. An elevator pitch is three sentences:

1. Who am I? – tailor it to resonate with who they are looking for.
2. What do I want? – tailor it to resonate with what they are offering.
3. A question – to start a conversation, research it, make it engaging and demonstrate the depth of knowledge you already have.

Technical abilities like data analysis are useful, but it’s the ‘soft skills’ like influencing, collaboration, and project management that get you in the door and help build a long-lasting career.

Imogen Resnick, Policy and Commissioning Manager, London’s Mayor’s Office

### Platforms for networking

- **LinkedIn:** The biggest professional social network, with powerful search tools.
- **Social media:** Use the search facility to find people who mention their employment or university in their profile. Follow relevant people or organisations, Post a message to your personal contacts letting them know what you are most interested in and asking for recommendations for people to contact.
- **Industry websites:** Many employer websites include ‘about us’ or ‘staff team’ pages where you can learn more about who works there (sometimes there is also an email address).
- **ResearchGate:** A social networking site for scientists and researchers to share papers, ask and answer questions, and find collaborators.

I encourage you to remind yourself too, that you can learn hard things. In fact, you’ve spent an entire degree doing exactly that.

*Jenny Milne, Graduate Software Engineer, Synalogik*

### Who could I network with?

- Oxford alumni:
  - Your tutors and your college alumni office may be able to give tips on who to contact.
  - Use LinkedIn.
- Contacts of people you know (ask friends, relatives, tutors for introductions).
- People you have worked with, or contacted on behalf of a society or committee.
- People you research online and then approach speculatively.
- Fellow students, in college and in your department, will know people and have experience that might tie in to your goals.



# Building your occupational awareness

It can sometimes be useful to look at what other Oxford students have done after completing their degrees to get a better understanding of the breadth of choices open to you. To go beyond the outline provided here, use the Careers Service’s webpages on The Graduate Outcomes Survey to see the early-career destinations for Oxford graduates from 2012 to 2020.

### Further study

Just under 20% of graduates choose further study and the Careers Service provides support and advice on this.

Consider carefully what benefits you hope to gain from undertaking another degree, against the time and costs required. Although further study is a prerequisite for some careers, and highly desirable for others, for many careers it’s unnecessary and may make no difference to either your entry level or starting salary.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/further-study](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/further-study)

### Occupational sectors

Careers are often labelled according to their industry sector, and the latter section of this Guide provides short industry introductions and company listings covering over 21 major industry sectors that our leavers enter. There are many more – nearly 50 – detailed briefings on our website, covering all the sectors in this Guide and more.

The end goal of your applications isn’t to get an offer, it’s to join somewhere long-term; make sure you’ll be happy where you end up.

*Rachel Marks, Consultant, CIL*





Functional roles

It’s important to consider which functional roles you might be most interested in. For some people, the function becomes their primary goal, so remember that the same functional role can be found in many diverse industries: charities need IT specialists, marketers and HR managers as well as front-line volunteers, fundraisers and policy-makers. Data analysts are needed as much in the advertising and retail sectors as in academic research, policy, finance and consultancy organisations.

Take time to think more broadly about where you might find opportunities that you’d be interested in. If you don’t limit yourself by exclusively targeting industries that seem to have the “right label”, you may be surprised at the possibilities you find – both as a first career destination or a few years later.

Changes in direction

Whatever direction you start out in doesn’t tie you to that industry or function for life. It’s quite natural for your ideas to develop and change as you gain experience and find new interests, or as new opportunities present themselves.

A change of career doesn’t mean wasted time: most of your skills will be transferable to other careers. Some graduates choose to gain specialist expertise through a graduate scheme, such as general management, marketing or accountancy, and use this as a stepping stone into an industry where graduate opportunities can be harder to find – such as in arts & heritage, charities, or the creative industries.



Routes into  
graduate  
employment

The Careers Service offers impartial advice on different approaches to finding graduate-level employment. We can relate this to different industry sectors and roles and will not steer you in any particular direction. Within a sector, there are a typical set of recruitment processes, but each organisation will manage its vacancies and applications in its own way, so:

- Understand both the industry pattern and the exceptions for the roles you are targeting.
- Be clear about timescales and deadlines from the beginning.
- Start your sector research with the 20+ short industry briefings in this Guide.
- Talking to companies and people doing the work in which you are interested can be invaluable. While you can network all year round, the first few weeks of Michaelmas term see hundreds of companies visiting Oxford every year for our career fairs and company-led events.
  - Follow employers’ websites and social media for the latest news and job alerts.
  - Use national graduate career sites like Prospects, TARGETjobs, and Milkround.

Graduate training programmes

Organisations that recruit a number of graduates every year often have structured training schemes. These generally last for one or two years and provide formal training and development as part of a structured programme. Often they also offer ‘rotations’ through a succession of roles in different parts of the organisation. Graduates gain a range of experience, specific skills, and a broad introduction to the firm and its industry.

Applications usually open during the summer (July onwards) and often close during Michaelmas term (some as early as October!) for start dates in July to September following graduation. Check the relevant industry sector briefings for more specific information.

In addition to attending our careers fairs, some employers run separate company presentations in Oxford. Attend employer events to learn more about their graduate scheme, or use them to deepen your knowledge about that company and meet people from the firm. You'll find these listed in the Events Calendar in CareerConnect.

### Individual graduate roles

Many more graduates join organisations to fill a specific position rather than as part of a graduate training programme. All types of organisations offer these direct entry roles, including employers with big graduate schemes. Direct entry roles are advertised widely, generally one to three months before a job starts. The best places to start looking for vacancies include:

- Individual organisations' websites and, increasingly, their social media feeds.
- The Careers Service's vacancy database on CareerConnect.
- National graduate career sites like Prospects, TARGETjobs, and Milkround.
- Industry professional bodies and specialist media channels.

### Unadvertised roles

A significant number of job vacancies are never advertised or only advertised via social media. Employers often recruit people they know, who are recommended to them, or who approach them speculatively. In certain sectors, such as media and advertising, networking is an essential and expected part of the application process for both full-time jobs and work experience. Networking can help you understand the industry in which you are interested and uncover possible opportunities. For more information see our [advice on ethical networking](#).

As you build your contacts and knowledge, you develop the foundations to make well researched speculative applications that are properly tailored to the specific needs of an employer.

### Recruitment agencies

Recruitment agencies help organisations recruit staff for a fee (paid by the company) by providing their clients with quicker access to pre-screened and qualified candidates. Agencies often specialise in specific sectors, and if you have relevant experience they can be an extremely effective way of finding work. Research agencies in your field and select one or two to build a relationship with.

If you are working with an agency, it is important to remain actively involved in your own job search and continue to check employers' websites and other sources for vacancies.

### Jobs from internships and work experience

Work experience and internships can be a great way to secure a full-time offer. This is especially true for companies offering internship programmes exclusively for penultimate-year students: these are often used as a core recruitment tool, where a successful internship may lead directly to a job offer for the following year.

All companies – large and small – may offer work experience or internships. In line with the advice for finding full-time positions, use company websites, our CareerConnect jobs board, and graduate recruitment sites. Speculative applications can also be highly effective, and sometimes firms will even create an opportunity when approached directly. Read our advice online about making speculative approaches.

Specific opportunities for Oxford students include the Summer and Micro Internship Programmes.







# Further study

**T**aught masters', research masters' or doctoral degrees? In the UK, Europe, North America or elsewhere? Narrowing down your options can be tricky.

## Consider your motivation

- It might be to satisfy intellectual curiosity, to access a specific career or to change direction. Think about what you need to know to assess how effectively potential courses can deliver your goals. Talk it over with a careers adviser if you need to.

## Talk to people

- Recommendations from Oxford academics in your field.
- People working in your sector of interest – find them on LinkedIn.
- Get in touch with prospective tutors and supervisors.

## Do your research

- Academic literature and conference proceedings to find key research groups.
- Destination statistics for each course.
- University rankings.
- Research Excellence Framework assessments of research departments [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk).

See the Further Study section of our website for useful information on what to consider before making your application, including funding advice.

## Studying abroad

Higher education is an international marketplace. You might be tempted by lower fees charged in certain countries, by the opportunity to improve your language skills or by a centre of academic excellence in your subject. Many universities in Europe offer courses taught in English. Application schedules vary, so research the differences carefully.



# Working outside your home country

**M**any Oxford graduates work internationally at some point in their career. Short and longer-term opportunities are widely available.

## Long-term international opportunities

Multinational companies, multilateral organisations, international development agencies and diplomatic services may offer secondments or transfers to their international offices after a period of time, or as part of graduate training. Talk to organisations of interest to assess your chances of gaining an international posting if you work for them.



Short-term employment

If you are seeking short-term work in another country and an opportunity to experience international environments, the Careers Service’s [Summer Internship Programme](#) provides opportunities across the globe.

Taking some time out to travel after graduating can often be funded by working simultaneously. Depending on your nationality, there are a number of visa schemes to help you gain short-term employment outside your country of citizenship. Check with the embassy of your destination to find out more.

People who are fluent in English are in demand as teachers all around the world, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) is a popular option for experiencing life in another culture. Read our online advice about TEFL teaching for full details.

Employers at Oxford and beyond

Many multinational firms visit Oxford’s career fairs. If you are interested in working for one of their global offices, ask their UK representatives how you can apply to work for the firm in a different country or your home country.

Visas

The Careers Service cannot advise on visas and the following information is intended as a general guide. You will need to be aware of any required languages, qualifications and documents, and investigate any work restrictions.

UK

The rules about staying in the UK to work after your studies are complex and subject to change. Ensure you regularly check the gov.co.uk website to remain up to date.

Every term the University’s student visa and immigration advisers run a joint session with the Careers Service which examines the current work visa options for international students. Students are encouraged to direct their specific queries to the visa team (details below).

For more information:

- [www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/work](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/work)
- [www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas](http://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas)
- [www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information-Advice](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information-Advice)

Outside the UK

Visa requirements vary significantly country by country. Individuals who are seeking to work outside of their home country should check the relevant government visa pages for their chosen country.

International networking

Alumni from Oxford live all over the world and are often happy to give advice to current students. There are over 350,000 alumni worldwide, with 150 regional alumni groups in over 90 countries. You can find the contact details for each group on the [alumni regional group website](#) to reach out for advice and build your network.

If you are an international student looking to work at home, maintain links with your home country. For example, keep in contact with friends at university there and join your national student society at Oxford for networking opportunities. Remember that the recruitment cycle and processes may be different to those in the UK.

The advice I would give is to keep your peripheral vision open as you navigate your career path. Embrace opportunities that might not be directly related to your current career goals but could develop your interests or skills.

*Dr Catherine Seed, Researcher Training and Development Officer, University of Oxford*

Online resources

- The Careers Service’s vacancy database on CareerConnect frequently holds job postings placed by international recruiters.
- GoInGlobal – an external resource accessible via the Careers Service website with your Oxford Single Sign On, featuring profiles of 42 countries, a directory of employers, as well as international vacancies and internships.

More information

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/goinglobal](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/goinglobal)  
[www.gradlinkuk.com](http://www.gradlinkuk.com)  
[eures.europa.eu/index\\_en](http://eures.europa.eu/index_en)  
[www.jobteaser.com/en](http://www.jobteaser.com/en)

Check our Finding Jobs Outside the UK webpage for more detailed guidance, including useful online resources for international jobhunting.



# Gaining experience and developing skills



## Developing core skills

### 1. Initiative

Recruiters want you to be able to demonstrate making things happen and getting things done. Ideas to help you develop this include:

- Organising a fundraising event for a charity.
- Helping to increase participation or membership for an event or society.
- Developing your own website, or building one for a student society.
- Starting your own society, social enterprise or small business.
- Volunteering as a student representative for your course.

### 2. Communication

Employers want to see that you have good interpersonal skills, and can communicate verbally and in writing – to empathise and persuade. You can display these skills by:

- Persuading guest speakers to attend a society event you are helping to organise.
- Securing corporate sponsorship for a club or encouraging alumni to donate as part of a college fundraising campaign.
- Work experience in a customer service role.
- Acting as secretary of a student society or your Common Room.
- Volunteering to help with outreach and access events: assisting at Oxford open days, or visiting schools to encourage students to apply to Oxford.



3. Teamwork

Organisations want to know that you can work in a group to achieve something tangible. There are many ways to develop teamwork skills, including:

- Joining a sports team. There are dozens of student-run sports clubs, and many more for individual colleges. See [www.sport.ox.ac.uk](http://www.sport.ox.ac.uk) for inspiration.
- Getting involved in other groups such as a choir, orchestra or band or theatre production.
- Joining The Oxford Strategy Challenge (TOSCA), or other student-led initiatives.
- Campaigning to promote social causes eg: mental health awareness, equality, access to education etc.

4. Creativity

Creativity is about being curious and innovative, finding new ways of doing things and understanding and taking risks.

Consider:

- Driving change by improving current systems and services.
- Creating a new scheme, event, service or programme.
- Working in an artistic endeavour eg: lighting, set and costume design as well as performing and directing.



5. Planning

Employers will want to see evidence that you can organise people and resources to achieve objectives and work to a deadline. Outside managing your studies, ideas of how you can develop this include:

- Organising a ball, bop, conference or campaign.
- Co-ordinating your Common Room’s annual elections.
- Organising an away-day for a society, or an inter-university match for a sports club.
- Editing a student publication, such as a newspaper, website or yearbook.

6. Leadership

Employers will want you to have the ability to motivate, influence and organise others. Leadership involves having a vision, enrolling others into your vision and delivering tangible quantified results. You can develop this by:

- Taking a position of responsibility in your Common Room or with Oxford SU.
- Producing or directing a play.
- Volunteering with youth organisations, such as the Girl Guides or Scouts.
- Captaining a sports team, or running a student society.

7. Self-management

Recruiters will want evidence that you can manage your own time, are flexible, resilient, and can improve yourself based on feedback. You can demonstrate this by:

- Taking part in extra-curricular activities work in addition to your degree. This will signal to employers that you can balance various responsibilities and workloads.
- ‘Up-skilling’ yourself. Why not take a course at the Oxford Language Centre, or a free course at IT services during term?
- Setting yourself personal goals that require training to complete, such as running a half marathon.
- Undertaking an extended research project as part of your academic studies.

8. In-touch and agile

Academia is about specialisation, and many courses at Oxford are quite traditional and/or theoretical. Being ‘in-touch’ means being aware of the broader general context, and being sensitive to new and emerging trends. Being agile



means demonstrating responsiveness to these emerging trends in a practical and productive way. You can:

- Research the latest and potential future trends in your sector of interest eg: how will AI influence the way we work now and the future of work? How will sustainability affect global travel and/or food security?

## 9. Computing & IT

Literacy in basic IT software is vital for almost every sector and opportunity in the modern job market. Many roles will require familiarity with particular programmes or applications, so it is best to become comfortable with some of the most popular software used in your sector(s) of choice.

You could boost your IT ability by:

- Enrolling in a free course and learning to do something new: Oxford's IT Services offer a wide range of free courses during term.

And if you are already quite skilled, you could try:

- Designing an app.
- Making a website for a student society.
- Volunteering to help out your college IT officer.

## 10. Commercial awareness

All organisations – including not-for-profits – will want you to understand the key factors behind successful businesses.

You can develop commercial awareness by:

- Organising an event that has to turn a profit, such as a concert, ball or a college bop.
- Joining The Oxford Strategy Challenge (TOSCA) to get an insight into how businesses work.
- Keeping up to date with the news; regular reading of publications related to your industry.
- Negotiating with a local business to give a discount to members of a student society you belong to.
- Joining relevant student societies.

Find more detailed guidance on how to master each of these core skills during your time at Oxford in the Build Skills section of the Careers Service website.



# Joining employability programmes

The Careers Service runs several programmes to help students develop and practise the key skills outlined in our article on core employability skills.

## The Oxford Strategy Challenge

The Oxford Strategy Challenge (TOSCA) is a team based experiential learning event, with participants working on real strategy-focused client challenges over a week. TOSCA is an opportunity for you to develop a broad range of transferable skills including teamwork, leadership, communication and business awareness. These along with the client relationship experience, will help you demonstrate your potential in applications, on your CV, and in interviews. You will be placed in a small team providing consultancy on a client project. The project you will work on will be important to your client, an opportunity for hands-on client experience, and you will make a real contribution to an organisation. The programme runs regularly throughout the year so check the website for current dates.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/oxford-strategy-challenge](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/oxford-strategy-challenge)

## Making a Difference Programme

A high-impact programme empowering students to build careers in charities, social enterprises and corporate roles that drive change for good. Making a Difference provides participants with the key skills, relevant experiences, and a network of stimulating people working in the wide field of charities and social enterprises. It will provide you with an insight into all the career paths possible that together can provide a sense of purpose and impact.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/making-a-difference](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/making-a-difference)

**Insight into... programmes**

The Careers Service has established a series of ‘Insight into...’ programmes to accelerate students’ learning and provide direct experience of the workplace and style of work in different sectors.



**Insight into Pharma/Biotech**

This programme is specifically for science students who are interested in working in the pharma/biotech industry and includes online panel talks which focus on different roles within this sector. Typically running each academic year, this programme provides the chance to hear from scientists working in biotech research who will talk about the differences between academic life and industrial research, alongside those who have opted to use their science away from the bench but still in the pharma/ biotech industry. As part of the programme we have also introduced a panel talk with speakers who work in the medical communications industry.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-pharmabiotech](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-pharmabiotech)

**Insight into Medicine**

If you are thinking about a career in medicine then spending time shadowing a doctor is extremely important, not only to help you decide whether a medical career is right for you, but also to enhance your UCAS application to medical school. If you have difficulty arranging your own work shadowing, this programme enables current matriculated students at Oxford University (undergraduate or postgraduate) to spend a day with a hospital consultant in Oxford.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-medicine](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-medicine)

**Insight into Creative Writing**

The Insight into Creative Writing programme is designed for aspiring writers eager to explore the diverse career opportunities in the creative writing field. Whether you aim to become an author, editor, scriptwriter, or content creator, this

programme offers invaluable insights and practical advice to help you navigate your journey. Participants will benefit from the expertise of industry professionals and academics, engaging in interactive sessions that cover everything from the writing process to getting published. This programme is perfect for those passionate about writing and looking to turn their creativity into a fulfilling career.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-creative-writing](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-creative-writing)

**Insight into Academia**

This seminar series explores topics relevant to those considering higher education roles in research, teaching and related areas. Open to current matriculated Oxford University students, alumni and early career research staff at the University. These informal sessions are intended to provide an open and impartial forum for you to learn more about the reality of becoming and being an academic, how to position yourself for success, and practical guides to job search and the application process in the UK and globally. All are led by careers advisers and we often invite early career academics and others to join us to share deeper insights. For more information see the website.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-academia](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-academia)

**Insight into Publishing**

Insight into Publishing gives future publishing candidates the chance to hear from professionals in the different departments of publishing companies as varied as HarperCollins, Elsevier and Oxford University Press. Participants gain an insight into the future of publishing and discover practical ways to make their job and internship applications publishing-focused. It runs over three sessions and is open to undergraduate and postgraduate students from all degree backgrounds.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-publishing](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-publishing)

**Next steps**

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/employability-skills](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/employability-skills)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-programmes](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-programmes)





# Seven ways to gain experience

Work experience is an opportunity to explore your options and learn new skills. Here are some of the benefits:

- A way to develop valuable skills and accomplish something noteworthy.
- A chance to try out possible career directions.
- An opportunity to make contacts in fields that interest you.
- A chance to earn money.

It also provides a valuable opportunity to develop an awareness and understanding of yourself: what really interests you, how you like to work, and what you find most fulfilling.

It also has a very important role in enhancing your employability. In a study of major graduate employers (*High Fliers* 2022), half of the recruiters surveyed warned that graduates with no work experience were unlikely to be successful in applying for graduate-level jobs in their organisations. This is because work experience:

- Enables you to enhance and apply your skills.
- Provides evidence of your skills and achievements that you can highlight in your applications and talk about in interviews.

Volunteering with local NGOs helps you get outside of your comfort zone, interact with people you might not otherwise encounter, and develop skills in communication and fundraising.

*Yujie Shen, Young Professional, World Bank Group*

## 1. Do an internship

These might be advertised opportunities requiring an application, or arranged with an organisation after contacting them speculatively. They can take place at any time of year, but most advertised opportunities take place in vacations, particularly the summer.

Some organisations offer internships purely to provide interested students with some first-hand experience and do not expect to hire interns at the end of the period. Others use internships as a core part of their recruitment process,

particularly major graduate recruiters, who often advertise summer internships for penultimate year students in Michaelmas term.

## 2. Volunteer

As a volunteer you can work on projects or tasks that still use and develop your skills, but you potentially have the added benefit of full flexibility and negotiable hours.

## 3. Insight days/open days

Some organisations advertise insight days, giving students talks and tours at their place of work. These are often offered to help students who are interested in the industry make a more informed application, but are not offered in all sectors. Many major graduate recruiters will run company presentations and events in Oxford or virtually, where you can learn about the organisation, their recruitment processes and meet their staff.

## 4. Work shadowing

Shadowing is a short period of time spent observing in a workplace. It can help you assess at first-hand whether a possible career might suit you, yet you don't have to have the skills needed to actively participate in the work. For this reason, formal shadowing programmes are often offered in fields where further training is required in order to actively participate, such as the health professions or teaching.

## 5. Spring weeks/spring insight programmes

In an increasing range of sectors, organisations with larger graduate intakes now run one- or two-week insight programmes targeted for first years (and for second years on a four-year course). These discovery programmes often happen around Easter and usually have their own application process. In addition to offering participants industry insights and the chance to meet recent graduate recruits, they frequently include some skills development, advice on applications and may lead directly to offers for summer internships in your penultimate year of study. Some accept applications in Michaelmas, so start looking early!

## 6. Vacation and seasonal work

Seasonal jobs can provide money, an insight into an industry and demonstrate your adaptability and skills. They are

often advertised in the few months preceding a vacation. They might be found on local employment websites, the organisation’s own website, through temping agencies, word-of-mouth or by signs on organisation premises. You might also be interested in organisations which offer seasonal work abroad (such as Work Away or WWOOF), some of which run on an accommodation-for-work (work exchange) basis.

7. Personal projects

Depending on your goals, you might want to generate your own experience. It could be:

- Creating a piece of work to add to your artistic portfolio.
- Starting an entrepreneurial or charitable endeavour.
- Using your technological skills to code a new website/ app/ game.

See if there are any local organisations that might be interested in using your project to help their work, or giving it publicity. Working with other organisations will give you new contacts and might lead toward referrals as well as increasing the scope for your project.

For more advice on finding different kinds of work experience at university, see our Finding Work Experience webpage.

How recruiters support equality and diversity

Recruiters are very keen to raise their profile with applicants from all backgrounds and to dispel perceptions that may deter applications. The best way to assess whether their projected image is ‘reality or myth’ is to speak with current employees.

A useful starting point can be the ‘buddy and mentor’ groups or forums (such as, LGBTQ+ and BAME forums), which many organisations now promote.

An increasing variety of organisations are also establishing internship programmes, insight days, networking events and mentoring opportunities to encourage a greater diversity of applications. Such opportunities will be focused on groups which an organisation feels are under-represented in their employee profile; so check what is available in the industries that you are most interested in. There may be opportunities that focus around gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability or for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

You could also explore specialist organisations that support candidates from under-represented groups, such as Creative Access, SEO London or Rare.



Making the most of the Internship Office

The Internship Office at the Careers Service offers a range of unique schemes that provide Oxford students with research and professional work experience opportunities with organisations across the UK and around the world.

The Summer Internship Programme

This programme offers hundreds of summer internship opportunities in locations across the globe, all exclusively available to current matriculated Oxford University students. They’re offered in a wide variety of sectors, and often come with funding support or travel scholarships. There are opportunities suitable for students of all levels of experience and of all years of study, from first-year undergraduates to final-year DPhils. Internships can be in person or remote.

The Internship Office ensures that every placement comes with some funding or assistance with travel or accommodation. Internships are advertised from January each year, with application deadlines from February onwards.





### **Crankstart Internship Programme**

If you are a Crankstart Scholar, additional funding is available specifically for undertaking internships. You can apply for this at any point during your undergraduate studies. Internships can be sourced through our regular programmes, independently (directly with an employer) or through our exclusive Crankstart Internships, which are advertised via a regular newsletter.

### **The Micro-Internship Programme**

The Micro-Internship Programme offers voluntary, short-term learning and development opportunities across the UK and beyond. Placements last up to five days, and take place in 9th or 10th week of each term. The opportunities are open to all matriculated students. Each placement offers the chance to gain useful insight into a particular sector while tackling a challenging work project to gain key employability skills. Micro-internships are available in all sectors, from investment firms to consultancy, tech start-ups to heritage sites. Placements can be in person or remote.

### **The Crankstart Careers Mentoring Programme**

The Programme matches Crankstart Scholars with an experienced professional in an industry/sector which the student is personally interested in pursuing. Mentoring can be a great way to gain different perspectives, insight into certain sectors and develop key skills – among many other things.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/crankstart-careers-mentoring-programme](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/crankstart-careers-mentoring-programme)

#### **More information**

See the Our Internship Office section of our website:  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/internships](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/internships)



# Application essentials

**Good advice on applications applies to every aspect of the process, from preparing your CV and cover letters through to interviewing and assessment centres. And it is relevant for any application, whether it's for further study, a small charity, a graduate position or an internship with a leading multinational.**





# Successful applications

Throughout the application process:

- Demonstrate that you have the desire to do the job; the right mix of skills; and potential to grow and learn.
- Explain clearly why you want to join their organisation; and how you fit both the role and the culture.

Before applying, analyse the advertisement or personal specification to understand:

- What the job entails.
- Which skills are most important.
- What excellence might look like.

## Identify and evidence the required skills

Application forms often ask you to give examples of the specific skills sought. Even where these are not clear, or when making a speculative approach, you should try to identify which core employability skills are likely to be most important for the organisation.

The examples you use in written applications and interviews can be drawn from a variety of activities, as transferrable skills are developed in many situations – through your studies, extra-curricular activities, and work experience.

Remember that you need to make it clear to recruiters how you meet the criteria of the post with concrete evidence. Never expect recruiters to infer how you fit their criteria. Instead, make it easy for them to find the evidence they are looking for. Check out the Writing Applications section of our website for more detailed guidance.

Don't reject yourself: always go for what interests you, even if you're not sure if you will be successful in an application, and if you do get the rejection then move on to the next thing.

*Jessica Kaye, University and Community Partnerships Manager, The Oxford Hub*



# Equality and diversity in the application process

Many employers are proud to have robust diversity and inclusion policy and practice – look for indicators when researching organisations.

Applicants have protection in law. This will vary depending on the country you wish to work in but the UK Equality Act 2010 protects you – at all stages – from discrimination due to disability, age, gender, race, religion and beliefs and sexual orientation.

Ultimately, what matters is how you evidence your skills, motivation and competencies throughout the application process – you are your best advocate!

Depending on your situation, and to prevent putting yourself at a 'disadvantage' to others, you may choose to 'disclose', or be open about, your circumstances, so that the recruiter can put in place adjustments/support that enable you to demonstrate your potential at each stage of the application process (such as, extra time for online tests, specific software for visually impaired applicants, visiting the test centre before the day to familiarise yourself with the layout and many more).

It is your personal decision whether or not to tell a recruiter of your circumstances. Try not to pre-judge how recruiters might view you from what you have read or heard in the media and from others – instead, seek advice and more information to help YOU to make the right decision for YOU.







# CVs

## Getting ready to create your CV

- Create your long list of all your experience, achievements and key dates. Transferable skills are developed and demonstrated in diverse situations, so include:
  - Educational achievements, prizes, awards.
  - Voluntary, paid and unpaid work experience.
  - Involvement in societies, sports and clubs.
  - Additional interests and skills (for example, languages; IT skills; music).

For each application, identify the skills and competencies required and update your CV accordingly. Check our CVs webpage for more guidance on this.

## There are four key characteristics of CVs that work well:

### Relevance

- Content is relevant to the position applied for – this is not a list of everything that you’ve done.
- Content highlights your personal contribution.

### Clarity

- A well laid-out CV is inviting to read and easy to scan quickly.
- Use simple language – avoid jargon, acronyms and technical details that may not be understood or provide too much detail.

### Evidence-based

- Use numbers, percentages and values to quantify impact and give a sense of scale to actions.
- Avoid unsupported assertions or opinions.

### Brevity

- Use bullet points to package information succinctly.
- Avoid too much context, excessive detail or unfocused material that will dilute the impact of your most relevant messages.



## Applications outside the UK

Expectations and conventions for what is acceptable in a CV varies between countries. If applying outside the UK, research country-specific current practice, starting with:

- Our advice on Working in Different Countries.
- GoinGlobal country reports, free to use via [www.careers.ox.ac.uk/goinglobal](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/goinglobal).

## Other forms of CV

### Creative CVs

If you are applying for a ‘creative’ role, in advertising or design for example, they may look favourably upon an infographic or otherwise visually unusual CV.

### Academic CVs

There is no upper limit on the number of pages expected in a CV for an academic post. Information should still be relevant, brief, evidence based and clearly presented. If applying for a postdoc, fellowship, lectureship or research assistant post, make sure your CV has:

- Sections for professional memberships, publications, and conference presentations/posters.
- A focus on areas specific to academia, such as research experience, teaching experience and any university/ college administration or committee work.
- Details of successful bids for awards, grants and collaborations.
- Referee details – usually three – ideally academics who both know you and are recognised in your field.

## Final checks

- Always check carefully for errors and typos – many recruiters dismiss well qualified candidates if there is even one typo in the CV, cover letter or application form!
- Check for jargon and acronyms, and over-long bullets.
- Is it the right length?

## Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/cvs](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/cvs)

<div><div>SIÂN MAGELLAN</div><div>Balliol College, Oxford, OX1 3BJ</div><div>M: 07685 314529      E: Siân.magellan@balliol.ox.ac.uk</div></div>	
.....	
EDUCATION	
<b>BA Hons English, Balliol College, University of Oxford</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>First year exam results: 2.1 (65 average)</li><li>Researched and delivered on time 12 3,000 word essays on new topics in each 8-week term for discussion with peers and leading academics</li></ul>	2020 – 2023
<b>St John’s School, Milton Keynes</b> <p>A levels: French A*, English A*, Chemistry A, Geography A GCSEs: 5 A*, 3 A, 1 B including A* in English and Maths</p>	2013 – 2020
EXPERIENCE	
<b>WWOOF, Organic Farm in Haute Vienne, France, Volunteer (summer)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Independently planned and organised 2 months’ work in France</li><li>Improved to near-fluent French, while learning food production chain process</li><li>Developed good working relationships with 22 colleagues from 12 countries</li></ul>	2022
<b>Oxford University, The Oxford Strategy Challenge (TOSCA), Team Leader (Online)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Led a team of 5 students to develop marketing strategy for local start-up</li><li>Designed and executed electronic and phone surveys, engaging 250 participants</li><li>Presented recommendations to client; all implemented within 3 months and delivering 20% increase in sales within 6 months</li></ul>	2021
<b>EGM Analysis, Market Research Assistant (1 month internship)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Produced 8 accurate data tables to summarise previous field activities using SPSS</li><li>Presented daily key data summary to managers with a colleague</li><li>Developed knowledge and interest in marketing and consumer goods</li></ul>	2021
<b>Red Lion Hotel, Newport Pagnell, Waitress (part-time summer work)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provided professional, courteous dinner service in busy gastro-pub with 80 covers</li><li>Maintained positivity and good working relationships in high-pressure service environment</li></ul>	2021
<b>Milton Keynes Hospital, Data Entry Clerk (part-time holiday work)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Developed administrative skills, and understanding of organisational processes</li><li>Ensured accurate classification of records and meticulous proof reading</li><li>Liaised with 6 hospital departments to compile datasets to tight deadlines</li></ul>	2021
OTHER SKILLS AND INTERESTS	
<b>Languages:</b> English – native; French – near-fluent; German – conversational <b>IT:</b> Proficient in Excel and SPSS, WordPress, InDesign and MS Office <b>Music:</b> Lead clarinetist in Milton Keynes Youth Band; member of National Youth Orchestra Marketing Officer for Balliol College wind ensemble. Promoted concerts and managed ticket sales, increasing audience numbers by 30% in the first year	
<b>Sport:</b> Balliol College women’s football team; training twice a week Captain of St John’s School women’s football team (under 18s)	
<b>Travel:</b> Extensive travel throughout Europe, including organising work placement in France	

Comments on Siân Magellan’s CV

Overall

- Looks easy to read.
- Text and dates aligned, no full-stops and plenty of ‘white space’ around text.
- Consistent use of headings, capitals, and bold text provide clear signposting.
- No jargon or acronyms that may muddle understanding.
- Numbers, percentages and values add clarity and give a sense of scale.

Bullet points

Separate bullet points cover a single idea, skill or activity.

Note: Siân has used Context, Action, Results (CAR) as a structure for her Experience section.

- Context:** Dates, organisation name and positions/role give sufficient context.
- Action:** Bullets start with active verbs/skills, aligning these to left margin for ease of scanning.
- Results:** Outcomes included to show how and where Siân added value.



Cover letters

Always submit a cover letter if you have the chance. Aim to be focused and engaging. Make a strong and persuasive case built on your research and supported with evidence linked to your CV.

The cover letter gives you scope to:

- Showcase what interests and drives you, your enthusiasm for an organisation and the role.
- Align yourself with the organisation’s strengths, values and culture.
- Highlight your knowledge and strongest, most relevant skills for the position.

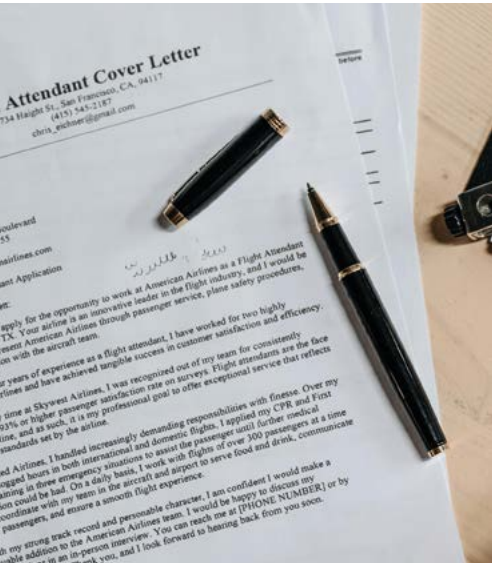
Write in clear, concise English – take care not to drown your reader with detail, and avoid jargon they may not understand.

When you feel your cover letter is finished, put it down overnight (or at least for a couple of hours) before reading it through – aloud.

This also applies if you are writing a speculative letter or application, perhaps asking an organisation if they can offer you work experience. State clearly why you are writing in your opening paragraph, and go on to outline two or three areas where your core skills and experiences best fit the organisation’s needs. Close with an indication of what you would like to happen next.

A cover letter should have an introduction stating what you are applying for and your current role. A section on your motivation for applying for the role and the evidence of how you meet the criteria listed for the post.

See the various sample cover letters on the Careers Service website to get an idea of formatting and presentation.



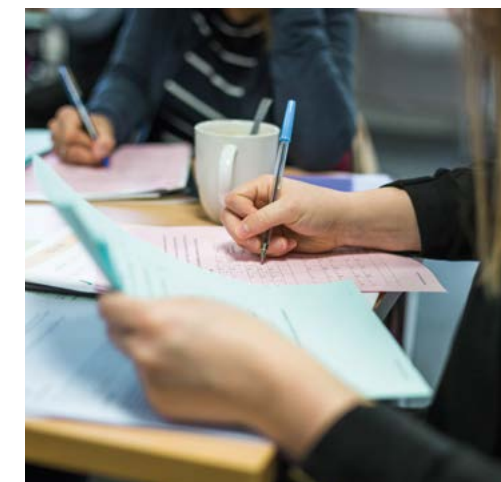


*Signature*



# Application forms for employment

- Bring your answers and job description to review with a Career Adviser at the Careers Service.
- Check you are using concise sentences and active verbs, and thoroughly check for typos.
- Ensure you don't lose your answers if the server 'times out'.
- Create a bank of material to help you answer similar questions asked by different organisations– but always tailor responses.
- Review your answers before your interview.



[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/application-forms](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/application-forms)



# Applications for further study

For most courses applications are made direct to each university. In Europe and North America most further study applications open during the autumn with deadlines between Christmas and Easter, but some do close earlier so check individual closing dates carefully. Some vocational courses have a centralised application system, notably graduate entry medicine, teacher training, and some law courses.

Details differ, but you are likely to need the following:

- Application form.
- Personal statement and/or research objective.
- Transcripts of university exam results.
- Two or three references.
- CV.
- Examples of written work.
- Results of standardised tests (such as, GRE for the USA).
- Payment of a fee.

Personal statements may be required as part of an application form, in place of a cover letter, and is your chance to explain your motivation for applying and why you are a great candidate for the course. The same principles apply as if you were writing a cover letter. Make sure to read and follow the guidance on what each application form is asking for from a personal statement and tailor your response accordingly.

## More information

See our guidance on types of further study, choosing a course, studying abroad, fees and funding at [www.careers.ox.ac.uk/further-study](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/further-study)

Don't be discouraged by rejections; persist and apply for opportunities that seem daunting.

*Zou Xinyi, Executive Assistant, Giving What We Can*

# How to reflect the same experience in a CV, cover letter and application form

For any application, you should lead with your best, most relevant experience for the role. It is likely, therefore, that you will want to refer to some experiences more than once in different elements of the process.

The paragraphs below illustrate how this might look for Siân Magellan's TOSCA leadership experience in her cover letter, application form and CV.

## 1. Cover letter

While participating in The Oxford Strategy Challenge (TOSCA), I developed my leadership skills by leading a team of five students to design and implement a marketing strategy to increase sales for our local start-up client. I organised our meeting schedule, allocated roles to each team member, coordinated with the client, implemented our surveys and ensured that we delivered our recommendations on time. As a result of my team's recommendations, six months later our client's sales have increased by 20% and I received excellent feedback both from the client and other members of my team.

## 2. Employer Application Form (EAF)

**Describe a time when you demonstrated leadership skills:**

Last January I led a five-member team on The Oxford Strategy Challenge (TOSCA), a programme run by Oxford University Careers Service to build commercial awareness and team skills. Within this timeframe, my goal as team leader was to deliver a series of recommendations to our team's local start-up client to increase its sales. First I





organised a series of meetings when all or most of us could get together to work on the project. Secondly I asked each team member to share their skills and insights into how they could contribute to developing an effective marketing strategy. Thirdly, and based on the combined skillset of my team, I allocated roles to each member, covering research, survey design and implementation, budgeting and reporting. Having established a way forward, we then agreed a timeframe for each aspect of the project. As team leader, as well as being responsible for survey implementation, I remained the focal point of contact with our client, keeping them up to date with all our project implementation, key findings and asking for any clarifications when required. I also kept in touch regularly with each team member in between our team meetings so that I could deal with any unexpected delays or findings and keep our project on track. We delivered our recommendations on time to our client, who welcomed and implemented them all. Six months later, the client’s sales have increased by 20% and our suggestions are still being followed.

3. CV

EXPERIENCE

**Oxford University, The Oxford Strategy Challenge (TOSCA), Team Leader (Online)** 2022

- Led a team of 5 students to develop marketing strategy for local start-up
- Designed and executed electronic and phone surveys, engaging 250 participants
- Presented recommendations to client; all implemented within 3 months and delivering 20% increase in sales within 6 months



# Recruitment assessments

Psychometric and online assessments were widely used even before COVID-19 greatly increased virtual recruitment. Online tests may be used as an initial screening stage or later in the process, and candidates may be retested at assessment centres.

Recruiters use online assessments to screen large numbers of candidates. See [the Careers Service’s advice](#) on preparation and how to access free practice materials. To perform at your best in any assessment:

- Practice first to be familiar with the test and styles of questions so you can focus on finding correct answers rather than wasting time trying to understand how to answer the questions.
- Read instructions carefully and always use any practice questions offered by the recruiting company.
- Choose a time and place where you can focus without distraction.

In timed tests, work as quickly and accurately as possible. Read questions and answer-choices carefully. With multiple-choice questions, try to eliminate wrong answers quickly; for example, by using estimates in a numerical test to discard some options without working out every alternative. Keep

Equality and diversity: disclosure or being ‘open’

If you feel that you might be at a disadvantage to others in the application and selection process (for example, in online tests or video interviews), owing to a disability, health condition or dyslexia and dyspraxia, then contact the recruiter beforehand to discuss if the process can be adapted or ‘adjustments’ could be made for you, for example, by giving you extra time in the timed tests. Your experiences of adjustments that are made for you at university are a good guideline for what to ask for, or advise a recruiter to put in place.



an eye on the clock and do not spend too long on any one question – if you get stuck, move on rather than wasting time.

## Types of Assessments

*Ability tests* assess candidates' potential, not their knowledge. They are timed. Practice helps with familiarisation.

*Numerical reasoning* tests usually require only GCSE-level maths, and typically require candidates to extract information from charts and graphs, and calculate percentages and ratios. If your mental maths or calculator technique are rusty, start practising.

- Study different types of charts and financial reports in quality newspapers and the financial press.
- Attend the Careers Service's numeracy refresher sessions, advertised via CareerConnect.
- Brush up using maths revision games (for example, BBC Bitesize: [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize))

*Critical Thinking Assessments* (for example, Watson-Glaser CTA), and some verbal reasoning tests, evaluate your ability to extract the details and main points from a

## Further study applications: tests and interviews

Admissions tests are rare in the UK for Masters and PhD programmes. However, some vocational programmes (for example, Medicine) do require test results, and there may be tests to demonstrate your language capability.

In North America, standardised tests are an almost universal part of the application process. You will most commonly come across the GRE, but others exist and it is important that you check both which tests are required for your chosen courses and the cut-off dates for taking these. Research requirements early for any course you are considering.

In the UK, interviews are common but not ubiquitous. Not all Masters courses interview candidates, but most PhD programmes will. Vocational courses like the PGCE nearly always involve an interview. If you are based in a different country, you won't usually be expected to travel for interview: virtual online and telephone interviews are now widely used.

If you are interviewed, then expect a rigorous examination of your motives for applying to the course, as well as questions exploring your academic interests and knowledge. Be ready to talk about dissertations or other pieces of work, and keep in mind that this is also your chance to determine whether a course is right for you – particularly important for PhDs.



short piece of information, sometimes requiring you to make logical inferences from the text. Effective practice can improve scores by supporting familiarisation with question types and with the range and subtleties of the distinctions you need to make. Use the free practice resources on the Careers Service's website linked above. You should also read broadly outside of your academic discipline (for example, technical and business journals) to become comfortable with different written styles and language.

*Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs)* use a multiple-choice format and ask candidates to evaluate possible responses to work-related scenarios, or to identify the best (and worst) options. Scenarios frequently create a tension between achieving an objective (the task), the resources needed, and/or personal and interpersonal issues that may need resolving first, or which conflict with the organisation's stated values. These tests require the candidate to make finely balanced decisions.

*In-tray/e-tray exercises* try to simulate the working environment and can combine aspects of any of the above (verbal; numerical; CTAs; and SJTs) in a time-pressured environment.

*Game-based assessments* use simple electronic games that require no special skills (or preparation). They can be engaging and fun, but remember they are still assessments!

*Personality and Learning Style assessments* evaluate traits and work style preferences. They are usually not timed, and there are no right or wrong answers. Answer intuitively as yourself.





# Assessment centres

Many employers believe that individual interviews can't tell them enough about candidates and prefer to use a range of selection techniques incorporated into an assessment centre.

## What to expect

Assessment centres (ACs) tend to be a few hours to a full-day in length and will consist of a range of selection methods such as aptitude tests, personality questionnaires, case studies, group discussions, spoken presentations, one-to-one interviews, socialising (which is still observed!) and meeting recent joiners.

In recent years, some companies have opted to use virtual ACs. Going forward, we expect a mixture of virtual and in person ACs and encourage students to check with the recruiter how each AC will be held.

Applicants will usually be assessed against selection criteria based on the company's competency framework, which defines the core abilities, skills and behaviours judged to be necessary for the role. These competencies are likely to include [key transferable employability skills](#) as well as company-specific competencies and/or technical skills for some roles.

Typically, competencies include areas such as:

- Creativity, analytical skills and problem solving.
- Effective communication skills and teamwork.
- Business/commercial awareness.
- Ability to influence/persuade.
- Drive, initiative and flexibility.

A typical one-day assessment centre may consist of:

- Introduction and company presentation.
- Psychometric testing.
- In-tray exercise.
- A presentation.
- Lunch/socialising informally.

- Group exercise, solving a work-related problem.
- Interview(s): ranging from strengths-based to competency-based interviews.

The assessors will keep notes of how each candidate performs. Try to stay focused and in the moment throughout the day and stay positive even if you feel you under-performed in an exercise, as most skills will be assessed in more than one exercise and assessors are evaluating your overall performance.

## Presentations and written reports

You may be asked to prepare some materials in advance of the assessment centre or be given some time to prepare on the day based on a case study. You will present to the assessors, and possibly other candidates. When preparing your presentation:

- Make sure that you understand what is required and the time you have both to prepare and to present.
- Consider your audience – this will influence the content, level and tone of your presentation.
- Timing is important as you will be stopped when your time is up.

Keep the structure simple:

1. Tell them who you are and what you are going to tell them.
2. Tell them.
3. Summarise what you have told them.

Because time will be short, it is best to start with the key issue and your main conclusion or key recommendations. The rest of the presentation should support this conclusion.

- Structure your arguments and limit complexity – focus on three to six main messages.
- Support your ideas and themes with examples, statistics and facts, and (brief) anecdotes – but keep it moving to reach the end of your presentation.

Consider whether an interactive element would be appropriate given the context – in a teaching or training type role play, for example, this could be appropriate. Allow time for questions at the end if this feels appropriate.





## Group exercises

The most important outcome for group exercises is for the group to deliver successfully against the given brief. This really is not about winning or losing!

Successful teams work together. They find and use the best contributions from across the whole team and good teamwork involves listening to, acknowledging, and following through on the ideas of others: it's about building on one another's strengths and contributions.

But yes, you are being assessed, and assessors can only judge you on the contributions they see, so it is important to get involved and make sure that your contribution is heard. Even if your ideas are not taken up by the group there are many alternative ways that you can gain recognition – for example, by leading, facilitating, generating ideas, encouraging, monitoring progress, re-capping/summarising, questioning, or analysing.

- Get a good grasp of any information you are given, but don't waste time on minute details.
- Use the information given and help the group clarify objectives and select decision-making criteria. Use these to keep the discussion focused on shared priorities.
- Be assertive and persuasive, but also diplomatic.

- Listen to what everyone else has to say, and try to get the best contribution from each person.
- Don't assume that shy or quiet members have nothing to contribute – ask for their thoughts.
- Find the balance between taking your ideas forward and helping the group to complete the task.
- Keep an eye on the time and overall objective of the exercise, and help ensure that the group keeps on track and delivers against the brief.
- Wear a watch so you can still keep track of time if there is no clock in the room.

## In-tray exercises

In-tray or 'e-tray' exercises are a test of your ability to deal with a real work scenario. You may be given a simulated inbox full of emails, reports and other correspondence – or it may start nearly empty, but you can expect additional emails to arrive during the exercise.

- Employers are usually looking for you to prioritise your workload, draft replies, delegate tasks and recommend actions.
- Keep focused – time is often short, so work quickly and avoid getting too absorbed in any single aspect of this task.
- Take care to:
  - Read the instructions carefully and thoroughly.
  - Prioritise what is most important or urgent by scanning the information.
- Identify which items you need to complete during the exercise (handling tasks that are both 'urgent & important' as a priority).
- Select which items could be delegated/referred to someone else and those that can be noted for completion 'later'.
- Highlight any resource constraints, conflicts between tasks, or implications for the organisation.
- If asked to draft a written response to any item, identify the main points of your response quickly and expand concisely on them.

## Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/assessment-centres](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/assessment-centres)





# Confident interviews

If you have been invited to interview, you have convinced the employer that you are suitable for the role on paper. An interview is your opportunity to confirm this impression, and demonstrate that you are what the hiring manager is looking for.

## How to prepare

Repeat the preparations detailed throughout this section, but in more depth. Re-read the job description and candidate specification, and ensure that you understand the job and the competencies required. Be clear about the points you absolutely want to make, and practise building them into different answers.

As a starting point, prepare some answers to typical questions, and practise answering them aloud. Articulating your answers is harder than thinking them over in your head, and saying them aloud will help you to sound more convincing and fluent on the day.

- Be clear on your motivations: why you want to work for the organisation and do that specific job.
- Be ready to show commercial awareness:
  - Consider how recent global events, current affairs and the economy may affect the organisation.
  - Think about how the organisation competes in its market, and how it compares with its competitors.
  - Read a quality news source and be ready to offer an informed opinion on business and current affairs.
- Prepare some questions (note them down) to ask at the interview.

## Support at the Careers Service

- Sessions for improving your interview skills are held each term, and dates and times are advertised in our weekly newsletter and on CareerConnect.

- You can use a short discussion appointment with a careers adviser to discuss interview technique or tackle some general interview questions.

## On the day

- Plan your route and aim to arrive 15–30 minutes early to settle down and relax. Plan what you will do if there is an unexpected delay. Always have the name and telephone number/email of your main contact within the organisation.
- Consider what you are going to wear: be clean, neat and tidy, and dress appropriately for the environment you would be working in.
- First impressions are important: be ready to say hello with a confident handshake and steady eye contact.
- Remember that you are on show from the minute you arrive to the point that you leave.

## Competency-based recruiting

Many companies still use competency frameworks to identify and group related skills, knowledge, attitudes and abilities that are needed to be effective within their organisation and the range of situations typical for a particular role.

In interviews, competency-based questions are common and tend to follow the structure:

*“Can you tell me about a time when...?”  
[insert competency here]*

Using a simple framework to provide structure to your answer helps you to:

- Tell your story clearly and makes it easier for an interviewer to follow that story.
- Include all the most relevant and important points.

Structure your responses with these mnemonics:

For example, use the STAR outline to:

**First:** Briefly describe the specific SITUATION you were in.


**Second:** Describe the TASK you needed to accomplish. Give only enough detail for the recruiter to appreciate your contribution.

**Third:** Describe the ACTION(s) you took. Keep the focus on what you did rather than the efforts of the team, even for a group project.


**Lastly:** Describe the RESULT. Based on relevant measures of success, outline what happened and what you accomplished.

When appropriate, probably within an interview, you can extend this structure by including ‘E’ for **EVALUATION** (STARE):

- Highlight what you learned from the experience, or what you would change if you went through the process/ experience again.
- Explain how this experience might be relevant in the role applied for.



Situation  
Task  
Action  
Result



Context  
Action  
Result

- Be polite and friendly (but not over-familiar) to everyone you meet – receptionists, secretaries... everyone. Arrogance or rudeness will be noticed and will work against you.

### In the interview(s)

- Don't be afraid of silence:
  - Take time to think before answering.
  - Make sure you answer the question you have been asked.
  - Structure your answer so it is easy to understand.
  - If you have finished – and the interviewer remains silent – don't keep talking to fill the gap.
- Be positive in everything you say:

### Virtual and phone interviews

Some employers have reverted back to in-person interviews post-pandemic, but some are still using virtual interviews, particularly for first-round interviews. Prepare for phone or virtual interviews as if for a face-to-face interview – don't treat it any less formally.

If you're asked to do a video (or pre-recorded) interview, you'll be sent a video link and will complete the interview via webcam. You'll be asked a question, given a short time to prepare, and then have to record your answer; you can usually pause between questions but not after the question has been asked.

### When preparing for the interview

- Ensure that you have privacy for the interview away from noise and distractions. Ask friends or family not to disturb you – put a sign on your door!
- Ensure your phone/laptop is charged, check the signal/internet access, and/or that the virtual platform the recruiter has invited you to use is working properly.
- Have your CV or application form available as a prompt, as well as some paper and a pen for making notes.
- The main difference between telephone and in-person interviews is the lack of visual cues, but your body language is still very important as it affects your confidence and performance.
- Dress smartly, even for a telephone interview – as this will affect your overall attitude and confidence.
- Smile! By smiling, you will sound friendlier and more confident.
- Use gestures as you would in a normal conversation; this will help you sound livelier. Vary your pace and pitch to avoid sounding 'flat'.
- If there are any long silences after your answer and you are not sure whether to continue, you can always ask, "Would you like me to expand further on that?"
- You can stick post-it notes around your screen if there's some information you really want to remember during the interview – the recruiter can't see them.



### Strengths-based recruiting

More and more graduate recruiters use this type of interview as they understand that employees will perform best when using their individual strengths. They aim to get the best out of you by focusing on your natural aptitude, what you enjoy doing and what engages you.

In this type of interview, interviewers may ask a wide range of questions to get a good feel of your personal abilities and will be looking not only at what you say but also how you say it; to see if your tone, body language and expression demonstrate a genuine motivation.

They may ask questions such as:

- When are you at your best?
- What are you most proud of?
- What do you do well?
- What do you love to do in your spare time?
- How would a close friend describe you?
- How do you feel when working on a disorganised project? What do you do in situations like this?
- How do you ensure you maximise your time to achieve your goals and targets?

In order to prepare you will need to think about your achievements academically, professionally and in an extra-curricular capacity. What have you done that you particularly enjoyed – why did you enjoy it? Also, as with all interviews, think about the organisation and the role you are interviewing for: does it allow you to use your strengths and natural talents?

### Top tips for answers

Try to use examples from different experiences, such as your studies, work experience, extra-curricular activities and volunteering.

- Be as clear as possible – many of us tend to ramble when we're nervous, so use specific examples that provide evidence of your skills and contribution.
- Feel free to use examples already mentioned on your written application: the interviewer will not have memorised all of them. Be ready, however, to go into more detail.
- Think about the structure of your answer to ensure you that get the relevant points across clearly. For competency-based questions, use the STAR/CAR mnemonic.
- A good interview is a dialogue, and you should take an active role in the conversation.
- If you are not sure that you understand the question, ask for clarification. Similarly, if you are wondering whether you have answered a question fully, you can ask the interviewer if they would like more information.



## Prepare for the most typical questions

Employers will want to understand what your interests are, what you enjoy doing, and how these relate to the position, so some questions are quite common. They will want to understand what motivates you and how much insight you have into yourself, their company and the role – so be sure to prepare well and practise aloud for these FAQs.

- Tell me about yourself.
- What attracted you to this company?
- Why do you want this position?
- What will you bring to this role?
- Tell me about a time when you led a team/completed a project/worked with someone you found difficult to work with.
- What would you do differently if faced with that (difficult) situation again?
- What do you consider your greatest strength?
- ...your greatest weakness?
- What has been your greatest achievement?

- Don't make negative comments about previous employers or tutors.
- If asked about something that went wrong, outline what you learned from the experience and how you would handle it differently next time.
- Aim to keep answers reasonably short – if there is more that you could add, perhaps ask the interviewer if they would like more details or further examples.
- Don't let a friendly, informal interview style lull you into a false sense of security: you are still being assessed.
- Keep your answers professional, focused and relevant.
- Be aware of body language and try to maintain eye contact. This is particularly important in a panel interview, where eye contact can help you to engage all the panel members.

## After the interview

As soon as possible after the interview, jot down notes of what was discussed, what you feel went well, and what didn't go well. Consider how you could have responded differently and what you could add to strengthen your answer(s).

This will help if you are asked similar questions in future – including during a final-round interview – if the organisation decides to drill deeper into areas that have already been assessed.



## Handling offers or rejections

If you're offered a job and are still hoping to hear back from other recruiters, look up the advice on [handling offers on the Careers Service's website](#). If you are still unsure, discuss your situation with a careers adviser. If you are not offered the job, do feel free to contact the recruiter for feedback – it can be really helpful. Most importantly, learn from the experience and try not to lose confidence.

## Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/types-of-interview](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/types-of-interview)

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/interview-technique](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/interview-technique)

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/make-a-good-first-impression](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/make-a-good-first-impression)

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/case-study-style-interviews](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/case-study-style-interviews)

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/telephone-video-interviews](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/telephone-video-interviews)

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/handling-offers](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/handling-offers)

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# SECTOR BRIEFINGS AND ALUMNI PROFILES

The overviews over the next 130+ pages give you a summary of each sector followed by revealing insights from Oxford alumni about how they got into the sector, the skills they use day to day and how they made their applications stand out. This is an excellent place to start your research.

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# Academia and higher education

Working in the university sector offers a wide variety of professional roles from academic research and teaching to policy and HR.

Academia – a career in academic research and/or teaching – can be a stimulating career option, with the potential for significant autonomy and flexibility in your working life. It is a challenging route that demands commitment to your area of research and to producing the publications, grant applications and projects expected by university departments. Competition for roles often means several years of insecurity through fixed-term contracts before finding a permanent position.

It is near essential to have a [DPhil/PhD](#) in order to gain a permanent academic position in the UK and many other countries, though a small number of fixed-term research-assistant or technician roles for Master's graduates do exist. Following a DPhil/PhD, next steps include a postdoctoral research position or a fixed-term teaching contract; in some subjects it may be possible to move directly into a junior lectureship. Independent fellowships offer a grant to develop your own research, so attract many applicants. Postdocs, fellowships, assistant and technical roles may last from six months to several years.

Early career academics often take on a variety of roles as stepping stones to a permanent position, or towards a 'portfolio career' with academic work conducted alongside one of several strands such as consultancy, editorial or advisory work. Permanent lectureship roles combine research and teaching with administration duties, such as

organising seminars and committee work. There are very few permanent teaching or research-only academic roles.

Professional support roles in universities typically offer a stimulating range of activities, including opportunities to develop policy and interact with academics engaged in cutting-edge research. The range of specialisms extends from HR legal and finance roles through to research and teaching support, libraries, catering, fundraising, publicity and more. These roles often offer greater stability than an academic pathway.

Getting in and entry points

**For academic roles:** Postdoc positions are advertised year-round (check research group websites, social media, and academic jobs boards such as [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk)). Fellowship deadlines can be advertised up to one year before they start (check research funders' websites and follow their newsletters and social media). Junior research fellowships – most offered at Oxford and Cambridge – are highly competitive, and are advertised year-round, with many open between February and April. Lectureships are advertised year-round for the UK (though often in line with the academic cycle) and from September to December for North America. Contacts made through networking during your DPhil/PhD can share new positions as they become available and also provide advice on your applications.



**For professional support roles:** jobs appear throughout the year, and are advertised on jobs boards such as [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk), as well as on university vacancies pages. Many research-support positions (e.g. research assistant and technician roles) can also be advertised on research group webpages and social media. For roles such as admissions and outreach, recent student experience is advantageous, though opportunities to move into professional roles extend from entry-level to the most senior positions.

Extra-curricular ideas

For an academic pathway:

- Before doing a DPhil/PhD, gain experience by supporting research in some way. Ask academics in your field how you might assist on research projects they or others are running, or get tutoring or teaching experience with any age group.
- During a DPhil/PhD, get university teaching experience or tutor on school-focused education programme such as [The Brilliant Club](#).
- Start building a network around your area of interest. Join relevant societies, and attend Careers Service talks on developing a professional network within academia.
- Get your work out there; submit articles for publication and help with outreach events.
- Speak at conferences, or support/lead the organisation of one yourself.
- Apply for internships with non-UK universities and/or industry to gain international and practical experience, for example, those offered by the Careers Service.

For professional support roles:

- During your studies, get involved in extracurricular activities in your department or college.
- Search the professional, managerial and support roles advertised on [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) to identify roles of interest. Most professional-support functions are filled by university graduates.

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/academia](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/academia)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-academia](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/insight-into-academia)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/researchers](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/researchers)

Alumni profile

Dr Catherine Seed

**What:** I am a researcher, training and development officer in the MPLS (Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences) Division at the University of Oxford. This means that I support professional development training for DPhils, researchers and academics working in science-based departments, helping the team to deliver more than 100 courses per year. One day I am writing a new public engagement training course, and the next I am supporting the expert trainers we invite to deliver courses. I enjoy working with people to build knowledge and skills, and I see our teams’ role as contributing to a stronger and fairer research culture.

**Career path:** I originally trained in biology and anthropology, completing my doctorate in evolutionary biology. To support my studies as a doctoral student while living in Australia, I tutored in science communication and found a new passion. I used my doctorate to help build those skills further (e.g. organising a small science festival, entering writing competitions). I wanted to continue this work when I returned to the UK, but found limited opportunities, prompting a pivot to a job in widening participation and access at Oxford; working to make universities more representative of wider society and reducing barriers to accessing higher education. Working with a social mission was incredibly rewarding. Building on transferable skills in stakeholder engagement, digital communications and data analysis I moved from access into public engagement and communications, then to my current role in researcher training.

**Advice:** The advice I would give is to keep your peripheral vision open as you navigate your career path. Embrace opportunities that might not be directly related to your current career goals but could develop your interests or skills. I also encourage anyone to build the confidence to share their aspirations and achievements with others. The people around you want to help and connect you to ideas/opportunities, and that is so much harder when they don’t know what you are doing or what you want to do.



Position

Researcher Training and Development Officer, University of Oxford.

Background

PhD Evolutionary Biology, University of Western Australia, 2012–2016; MSc DIC Reproductive and Developmental Biology, Imperial College London, 2011–2012; BSc Hons Biology and Anthropology, Durham University, 2008–2011.



## Alumni profile

## Dr Tom Rhys Bishop

**What:** I am an insect ecologist and physiologist working at the interface of global change and biodiversity science. I use a novel combination of field, laboratory, and computational tools to understand the rules of biodiversity and to predict and manage the global changes that will impact species, ecosystems, and human well-being. My job as a lecturer is 40% research, 40% teaching, and 20% university and scientific service.

**Career path:** After a BA in biological sciences at Oxford University and a MRes in entomology at Imperial College London, I was awarded a NERC-funded PhD scholarship and then undertook two independent research fellowships before moving into my lecturing position. I'd add that my path is slightly unusual in that I didn't undertake any traditional postdoctoral positions following my PhD.

**Pros:** My time is largely my own and I make my own decisions as to what I work on and with whom, including academic societies. I have the opportunity to travel a lot for field work and conferences and to meet exciting people in science. I particularly enjoy generating new ideas with colleagues, running pilot experiments, and translating this work into grant proposals.

**Cons:** The self-imposed pressure to perform and the external expectations can sometimes be overwhelming. Further, the path to a permanent position can be long, tiring and demoralising. There are intense periods throughout the year when teaching or making deadlines mean that you have limited capacity to do your own research – long-term time management is crucial!

**Advice:** Firstly, network. Talk to people, send an email, build links. Secondly, learn that rejection is the rule. Papers and grants are usually rejected from the first place you send them. Learning that this is not a comment on you personally, but is just the way the system works is key to building up some resilience and energy to keep going.



## Position

Lecturer, Cardiff University.

## Background

Lecturer, Cardiff University, 2021–present; Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellow, University of Liverpool, 2018–2021; Research Fellow, University of Pretoria, South Africa, 2016–2018; PhD Environmental Science, University of Liverpool, 2012–2016; MRes Entomology, Imperial College London 2011–2012; BA (Hons) Biological Sciences, University of Oxford, 2008–2011.

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# Accountancy and financial services

**The financial services sector includes some of the largest graduate recruiters and offers positions across a wide range of functional roles (such as, legal, HR and technology roles) alongside financial and advisory roles. A high degree of comfort with numbers is important for finance-related roles, as well as key employability skills such as communication, team-working, problem-solving and analytical skills.**

In many areas, graduates can expect to study for a professional qualification alongside their work, which provides a firm foundation for a professional career. Most employers will pay for the training and routinely offer study leave to trainees. Accountancy training normally takes three years, and actuarial training from three to seven years.

## Accountancy

Accountants work in varied roles across a broad range of service areas, including advisory, assurance, corporate finance, tax and risk. Accountants play a key role in decision-making by providing accurate financial information and analysis for management. Therefore, organisations look for people with strong commercial awareness and good interpersonal skills – not just ‘number-crunchers’! There are opportunities in both commercial and public sector organisations at firms of all sizes. The larger organisations, including the ‘Big 4’ (Deloitte, EY, KPMG and PwC), have

broadened their focus to provide strategic advisory services, and now also include large management consultancy practices.

Chartered accountants provide professional advice to fee-paying clients, small businesses, large organisations, and individuals – in areas such as audit, financial reporting, insolvency and restructuring.

Management accountants usually work in-house (although they can be external), and their role is to advise an organisation’s senior management about the financial repercussions of business decisions, and to monitor corporate spending.

## Actuarial work

Actuaries are risk management experts, applying mathematical tools to assess the probability and risk of future events. Actuarial assessments are used in various industries, especially the pensions, insurance and investment sectors. Most successful candidates will have a numerate degree (such as, mathematics, statistics, economics), but students from other disciplines can demonstrate their numerical ability by passing an exam in either mathematics (MT1) or statistics (CS1).

## Insurance

Insurance is focused on protecting the value of an individual’s or organisation’s assets, and has huge breadth, including corporate insurance, personal insurance, reinsurance, and life assurance.

Firms are similarly diverse. Employers are generally open to graduates of all degree disciplines, although some employers have a preference for numerate degrees.

## Getting in and entry points

Meet firms at careers fairs in Michaelmas term and at company presentations. Monitor your target firms’ websites and attend virtual events where offered.

**Accountancy:** The large accounting firms open graduate recruitment during the summer in the year before graduation. Positions in London fill quickly in Michaelmas term, so apply early, whilst vacancies for regional offices may exist late into the year. Firms with smaller annual recruitment targets will typically open vacancies in Michaelmas term or recruit on an on-going rolling basis. It can also be worth considering





a speculative approach to small firms even if no ‘graduate programme’ is advertised.

**Actuarial work and insurance:** Graduate programmes will vary depending on the size of firm and areas of specialism, and application deadlines also vary, so research and prepare applications early.

Extra-curricular ideas

- Demonstrate your interest in the sector by becoming active in related student societies – e.g. the Guild; Finance Society (OFS); Women in Business (OxWiB).
- Show your financial acumen as treasurer for a society or JCR/MCR.
- Help run an event that makes a profit, from charity fundraising to a college ball.
- Apply to ‘insight days’ and ‘spring week’ programmes as a first year (or a second year on a four-year degree).
- Gain experience with the Careers Service [Employability Programmes](#).

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/accountancy](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/accountancy)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/actuarial-profession](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/actuarial-profession)

Alumni profile

Andrey Kluban

**What:** Since graduating in 2023, I have been working as an associate in the audit division of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), one of the “big four” accounting firms, known for its audit services. My role involves examining financial statements to ensure they present a true and fair view of the company’s records. The graduate scheme, which I joined, also includes fully-supported studying for the ACA qualification, which is held by a quarter of FTSE 100 CEOs. Despite the extensive studying, I have really enjoyed my experience at PwC because of its people and the challenging work environment.

**Why:** At the beginning of my MSc I explored a variety of career paths, feeling a need for a break from academia. I found audit appealing due to its analytical and challenging nature, and its ability to provide insights into how companies operate across various sectors. Additionally, as an international student, it was important to me that my organisation accepts candidates needing a Skilled Worker visa. Among the “big four” firms, PwC stood out for its investment in technology and care for its people. A highlight was their insight event held in the metaverse, compared to other companies’ events on Google Meet.

**Advice:** As an international student without prior internship experience, I advise those interested in a career in audit or finance to be proactive and prepare thoroughly for assessment centres. Nothing is impossible. From conversations with students from other universities, I can confidently say that Oxford has one of the best careers services. Oxford offers numerous internship opportunities during term breaks; for example, I worked as a consultant in The Student Consultancy. The Careers Service also provides access to various test-preparation platforms, such as JobTestPrep, which is invaluable for assessment preparation. Additionally, you can send your CV and practice interviews with careers advisors regularly. I was fortunate to work with an advisor who not only provided feedback but also built a strong connection, supporting me throughout my job search journey.



**Position**  
Audit Associate,  
PricewaterhouseCoopers.

**Background**  
MSc Sociology, Green Templeton  
College, 2023.



## Alumni profile

# Hannah Williams

**What:** Seismic is a sustainability consultancy based in London that specialises in helping companies become more sustainable. It uses the B Corp framework to encourage businesses to meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency.

Around half my time is spent evaluating assessments that companies in Europe have submitted to become certified B Corporations. This involves getting to know companies in a huge variety of industries – from fashion and water utilities to coffee manufacturers and law firms – and to challenge them on their business models and sustainable practices. Alongside this I complete Seismic Consultancy work too so I am always coming up against new and interesting challenges.

**Early career:** I spent Michaelmas term of my final year burning the candle at both ends and succeeded in securing an offer to work in business for a sustainable hospitality company in Singapore following graduation. Sadly, this fell through with Covid, and I went on to do a series of ‘odd jobs’.

I then worked at PwC as an audit associate for two years while completing the ACA Chartered Accountancy exams. I learnt a lot about finance, different businesses and working in professional services, but I continuously felt drawn back to work in sustainability, which led me to join Seismic.

**Advice:** Three pieces of advice have shaped my career up to this point:

- If you do not know what you want to do, go corporate first. There is a lot more money available for your training and personal development!
- Talk to EVERYONE about what you are interested in – my boyfriend got an internship from a man I met in the supermarket!
- Try lots of different things. If something does not resonate with you, take the leap and try something different. It’s scary but easier to do sooner rather than later.



### Position

Senior Sustainability Analyst & B Lab Evaluation Analyst, Seismic.

### Background

BA History, Balliol College, 2020.



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
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# Banking and financial markets

**Opportunities in this sector are many and varied, so if you are interested in finance you should be able to find the role and firm that's right for you.**

Generally, this sector can be split into the buy-side and the sell-side, within which there are a variety of roles offering very different remuneration, work/life balance and skill requirements.

## The buy-side (investment)

The buy-side make money for their clients including high-net-worth individuals, companies, governments, pension funds etc by investing their capital in various financial products. Their aim is to deliver higher rates of return by devising effective investment strategies.

You may have heard of terms including hedge funds, pooled funds, mutual funds etc. All of these fall broadly under the asset management umbrella and have roles including fund managers, analysts, researchers and operations analysts. All have different skill sets but as an investment analyst you would typically conduct research and analysis to make decisions about which companies to start or stop investing in.

## The sell-side (banking)

The sell-side provide a market for their clients (the buy-side) to purchase financial products; this is known as



market-making. They also provide complementary research and custodian services (the holding of assets). The market-making roles, often referred to as ‘markets’ or ‘secondary capital markets’ include sales, trading and research roles.

The sell-side also has another core function in helping companies raise capital. This can be in the form of debt (similar to you taking out a credit card or loan) or equity (selling a part of their company). These markets are often referred to as DCM (debt capital markets) and ECM (equity capital markets).

Quantitative/Proprietary Trading firms, also sometimes known as 'electronic market makers', are another significant part of the sector. These firms develop trading strategies based on quantitative analysis using automated trading models, and typically hire graduates with masters' and PhDs in STEM subjects.

## Mergers and acquisitions and corporate finance

The other function of investment banks and other specialist corporate finance houses is to help companies to restructure through buying or selling parts of, or their whole company, or merging with another company. This is known as M&A and the function most readily associated with ‘investment bankers’.

This is a deals-based, high-profile function and often the most competitive. Bankers in this area often work the longest hours, and are amongst the most highly paid.

## Getting in and entry points

This is a highly competitive sector so proper research and preparation are key to securing the right job.

You don't need to have studied a finance-related degree in the UK, but it's important to have a keen interest in, and understanding of, the wider concepts within the banking industry and global markets. You also need a high degree of analytical intelligence and the ability to build and maintain good working relationships in what can be a competitive and pressurised environment.

In order to secure a full-time graduate role getting work experience is very important, and even a requirement for some firms. It's important to note that most banks, and increasingly asset management firms, use their internships as a major pipeline for their graduate programmes. Look for banking 'spring weeks' (typically one-week work experience)



in your pre-penultimate year and summer internships (8–12 weeks) in your penultimate year to gain as much experience and exposure as possible.

Have a good understanding of application deadlines; these can open as early as July and often work on a rolling

basis, (they are reviewed as and when people apply) so there is a benefit to applying early.

If you don't get an internship in your penultimate year, all is not lost; a number of the large banks offer 'off-cycle' internships for those who have just graduated and smaller boutique banks, corporate finance houses and trading firms offer less rigid recruitment processes.

See the more detailed briefing on our website for further information on the skills required and recruitment timeframes associated with the different job functions.

Extra-curricular ideas

- Engage with employers at careers fairs, etc, especially in Michaelmas term.
- Join and actively participate in relevant student societies: for example, the Oxford Alpha Fund, CapitOx, the Oxford Guild, and the Oxford Finance Society.
- Demonstrate your skills at managing finances by overseeing your own fantasy fund or learn a valuation methodology such as discounted cash flow (DCF).
- Apply to 'insight days' or 'spring week' programmes in your first year (or second year of a four-year degree).

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/banking-investment](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/banking-investment)

Alumni profile

Leon Galli

**What:** Optiver specialises in market-making across a broad range of products. Rather than holding onto large positions for long periods like a hedge fund might, we're constantly buying and selling throughout the day, focusing on small price differences to accumulate gains without carrying significant risks. As a trader, you might end up working on a variety of desks, some of which rely heavily on quick decision-making, while others focus on automated trading at scale. My day-to-day involves a mix of improving the mathematical models at the core of the desk and stepping in to make manual trading decisions when we're faced with sudden changes in the market that the model won't properly adjust for. It's a fast-paced environment where you are constantly solving problems and seeing the impact of what you do in real time.

**Why:** I didn't start out wanting to be a trader and originally thought I'd become a maths teacher. But after a friend suggested that I should look into trading, I decided to apply for an internship at Optiver. What stood out, even from the interview process, was how different it was from the traditional finance roles I had imagined. Instead of generic 'tick-the-box' questions, I was solving maths puzzles that tested my problem-solving abilities. The experience showed me that the company doesn't fit the finance stereotype I had in my head – it's much more about critical thinking and real-time decision-making. The collaborative environment and constant learning opportunities I encountered during the internship confirmed that this was the right place for me.

**Advice:** The best advice I can give is to try it out. If you're considering trading but aren't sure if it's for you, an internship is the best way to find out. You don't need a finance background – what matters is how you approach problems and how eager you are to learn. The specific courses you take really don't matter. Start getting used to being outside your comfort zone. Make sure to focus on understanding problems deeply rather than just taking surface-level solutions as a given – this mindset will serve you well in any challenging role.



Position

Trader, Optiver.

Background

MMath Mathematics, Lincoln College, 2022.



Alumni profile

Lucy Hamilton



**What:** I work within the FX Institutional Sales team at HSBC, providing foreign exchange sales coverage to banks, central banks, asset managers and hedge funds. My day-to-day involves keeping clients updated with market colour throughout the trading session, communicating with traders to ensure client requests are priced quickly and accurately, and being a key touchpoint for our clients within HSBC.

**Career path:** I felt stressed about my future as Chinese studies didn't lead to an obvious career path. I thought I needed a finance degree to go into banking, until I noticed friends from non-finance backgrounds secure internships. I explored the industry by joining OxWIB and the Finance Society, using the Careers Service, securing a wealth management internship and attending company insight programmes. Markets offered a fast-paced, varied atmosphere and a reasonable work-life balance. I landed an off-cycle markets internship at HSBC followed by a graduate scheme offer a few months later where I completed residential training, sat my regulatory exams, and completed three rotations across different teams. In March 2025, I graduated from the scheme onto my chosen team, FX sales.

**Advice:** The application process is time-consuming, and each application is unique. My key take-aways from the process are:

- Internships proved more effective for me than direct applications to grad schemes. Internships give you the opportunity to make sure you enjoy the role before committing.
- Extracurriculars matter more than you think to demonstrate that you've explored the industry.
- Attend insight events and use the connections you build.
- Use the careers service! They helped me perfect a skeleton for my CV, write cover letters, and practice for assessment exams.

**Position**  
FX Institutional Sales, HSBC.

**Background**  
MSc Contemporary Chinese Studies, St. Anne's College, 2023.



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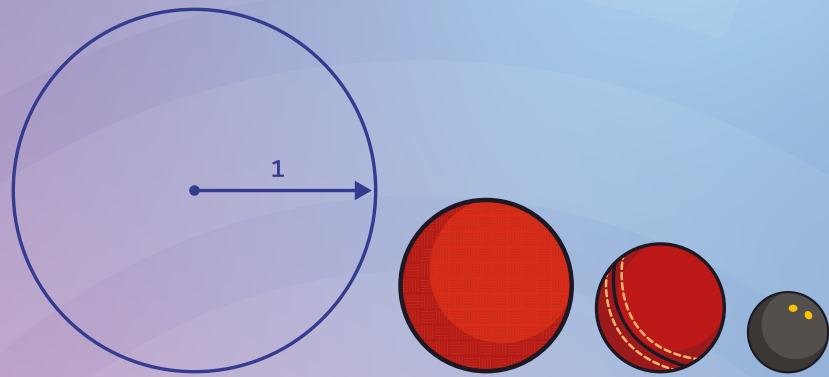
Voluntary, short-term learning and development opportunities available in the vacation periods.

Micro-internships last between two and five days and take place either remotely or in person.





## PUZZLE PACK



Assume you have a circular enclosure with radius 1 to put away each type of ball.  
The dodgeball has a radius of  $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
The cricket ball has a radius of  $\frac{1}{3}$ .  
The squash ball has a radius of  $\frac{1}{6}$ .

How many dodgeballs can you fit into the enclosure?  
How many cricket balls?  
How many squash balls?

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# Business

**From multinational companies to city councils, business permeates all sectors. The range of opportunities spans a range of functions including strategy, HR, IT, finance, marketing, logistics and sales to name but a few.**

Many Oxford graduates enter this sector for a career with prospects of early management responsibility, good salaries and benefits and the possibility of working globally. There has been a huge shift in the business sector over the last few years, with a large proportion of companies putting a greater focus on sustainability initiatives, social and environmental impact and employee welfare. This is sometimes referred to as ESG (environmental, social and governance) matters and many organisations are focused specifically on these topics.

Given the breadth of roles available, it makes sense to consider the type of business you want to work in and the sort of role that appeals to your strengths and interests. If a deep commitment to ESG topics is of importance to you, it's worth looking at the structure of individual companies to see if the organisation takes sustainability, environmental, and social issues seriously by embedding them within company values and strategic planning. Evidence that an organisation is deeply committed to ESG can include, there being someone in a senior position within that company who is charged with leading on strategy for ESG and/or if the business is a certified B Corp ([The UK B Corporation Movement](#)).

Roles within businesses can include management activities such as:

- Defining strategy and objectives, allocating resources, meeting targets and taking responsibility for business decisions.
- Project work.

- Human Resources - recruiting, supervising, motivation and developing staff to ensure effective team working.
- Controlling finances and managing budgets.
- Managing marketing or supply chain strategies.
- Client business development.
- Problem solving and dealing with complaints.
- Managing change.

## Getting in and entry points

Organisations recruit in a variety of ways. Large corporations may have extensive graduate programmes across a range of functions and smaller organisations may only recruit 1-3 people per year. Companies with graduate programmes sometimes offer the chance to try different 'rotations' within different teams and/or functions in the business over the course of typically two years. Recruitment timelines can vary greatly, large graduate programmes may open applications as early as August/September and smaller organisations often recruit all year round – it's important to check on their individual websites to be sure.

Demonstrating motivation for the business you apply to is essential, as is showing your ability to work with people and build relationships. Wherever possible apply for internships and if the organisation doesn't offer internships,





find out if there are other opportunities to gain relevant work experience such as volunteering, work-shadowing, undertaking extra-curricular activities and contacting organisations to create your own work experience opportunities.

Extra-curricular ideas

- Run a 'mini-business' such as a theatrical production or college ball.
- Make use of EnSpire Oxford ([eship.ox.ac.uk](http://eship.ox.ac.uk)), the entrepreneurial centre for Oxford students.
- Join [The Oxford Strategy Challenge](#) for an insight into the challenges faced by real businesses and for the opportunity to help solve problems faced by local companies.
- Become a campus ambassador for a large company (many employers advertise these via CareerConnect).
- Sign up for other relevant student organisations such as the Oxford Strategy Group and Oxford Women in Business.

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/business-management](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/business-management)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/entrepreneurship-social-enterprise](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/entrepreneurship-social-enterprise)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/management-consultancy-beyond-the-obvious](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/management-consultancy-beyond-the-obvious)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/sustainability-environment](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/sustainability-environment)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/careers-with-social-impact](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/careers-with-social-impact)

Alumni profile

Dr Janette McKnight



**What:** I work as a new business development (NBD) and marketing project lead at Johnson Matthey, in a team that supplies catalysts to industries like pharmaceuticals, agrochemicals, and cosmetics – areas closely linked to my DPhil research.

My role is a mix of strategic thinking and hands-on delivery. I lead initiatives to identify and pursue new business opportunities, while also creating marketing content and managing logistics for conferences and exhibitions.

One challenge is that, unlike in academic research where you can quickly act on new ideas, working in a large organisation means navigating stakeholder input and approval processes.

Before this, I completed Johnson Matthey's LEAD graduate scheme, rotating through three roles: product manager in Clean Air (catalytic converters), sustainability coordinator in the Platinum Group Metals business, and NBD manager in Life Science Technologies. Each gave me a different lens on how science and business intersect.

**Why:** I originally thought I'd follow the typical path for organic chemists – working in a pharma lab. But I realised I wanted to explore roles beyond the bench. The LEAD scheme gave me a secure way to try out different commercial roles while staying close to science.

I was drawn to the idea of making a positive impact on people and the planet. My current role lets me use my scientific background in a broader context – helping to bring sustainable technologies to market.

Top tips:

- Take time to reflect on what matters to you. The University's SeedWISE course helped me clarify my values and career goals.
- Don't be afraid to step off the expected path. Trying something new can lead to unexpected and rewarding opportunities.

Position

NBD/Marketing Project Lead,  
Johnson Matthey.

Background

DPhil Organic Chemistry,  
Wadham College, 2022.



Alumni profile

# Wini Rizkinigayu

**What:** As the Southeast Asia Regional Director at RMI, I lead a remarkable team dedicated to crafting a sustainable energy future. We blend cutting-edge techno-economy analysis with hands-on experience to develop innovative solutions for the clean energy transition. Positioned in a region of emerging economies, we view energy not just as a commodity but as a means to promote equitable livelihoods, sustainability, and economic development. I am privileged to be in the nexus of diverse stakeholders – government, private, and third sectors – and their strategic initiatives: it allows me to distil context-specific strategies, guiding my team to deliver impactful results in supporting the region’s decarbonization efforts.

**Why:** Southeast Asia is home for me; a region brimming with potential yet vulnerable to climate disasters. My journey began in the fossil energy industry, and transitioning to renewable energy mirrors the region’s shift towards sustainability. I often call my journey as ‘atoning my carbon sins,’ but more importantly, it’s about contributing to my home: supporting the region’s full potential and fostering a sustainable, equitable economy. As an organization, RMI aligns with my ethos of equitable clean energy. Leading the relatively new Southeast Asia team at RMI also gives me the unique opportunity to shape our initiatives meaningfully and contribute to solutions that are specific, inclusive, and just.

**Advice:** Firstly, network extensively. Join environmental and climate-focused societies, like the Oxford Climate Society. Building your community will provide you with insights and opportunities, as well as an invaluable connection and support system. Secondly, accept imperfection. Your journey will involve continuous learning and adaptive leadership. Don’t stress about perfection in your first job; diverse experiences will enrich your perspective. Finally, remember that pursuing a sustainable future is more than technical expertise; it’s about the people at the heart of it. The path to ‘business with purpose’ can be challenging and nonlinear but immensely rewarding.



Position

Regional Director, Southeast Asia Energy Program, RMI.

Background

Emerging Climate Leaders Fellowship, Yale University, 2025; MPP Public Policy, Exeter College, 2022.

Alumni profile

# Tilly Morgan

**What:** The Swire Group is a highly diversified global corporation, with businesses encompassing property, beverages and food chain, aviation, marine, as well as trading and industrial activities. Its core business is mainly focused on Asia, with its key operations in Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland.

I have been seconded to Swire Shipping for my first three years, starting in Singapore. As Assistant Commercial Manager for the Pacific Island region, I lead my own team and work closely with the Regional Commercial Manager. I am based in Suva (Fiji) and travel throughout the Pacific. Each day brings something new, and the impact I can make is significant.

**Why:** While I enjoyed my degree, I wasn’t passionate about becoming an engineer and the ‘traditional’ path to London and banking or consulting didn’t appeal. Given my love for travel, the Swire Management Trainee scheme allowed me to move abroad and start an exciting career with a wide range of opportunities all within one company.

Three years into the scheme, I’ve taken on significant responsibilities, faced challenging job roles, and maintained an exciting work-life balance. I’m now considering options for my next role and collaborating closely with senior leaders and the group head office to choose a path.

It has been an eye-opening experience living and working in Singapore and Fiji and experiencing completely different cultures. It was daunting to leave my UK-based family and friends, but everyone has been so welcoming, and there is lots of support from others who have made similar decisions.

**Advice:** While my journey may seem unorthodox, remember that you have nothing to lose early in your career so embrace all the opportunities you’re given. Taking the ‘scary’ option can often be best – I had another offer at an incredible UK company, but it wasn’t the right fit for me. Seize the chance to travel, whether a week in Scotland or a month in France. Meeting new people and discussing different experiences is invaluable.



Position

Management Trainee, Swire Group.

Background

MEng Engineering Science, Brasenose College, 2022.





Syrie Byfield, Oxford Alumna  
(BA Geography, 2019)

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## Micro-Internship Programme

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 Friday 10 October  
12:00 – 15:00

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[www.careers.ox.ac.uk](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk)

Sector Briefings: Charity and social enterprise 97

## Charity and social enterprise

**This sector offers: diverse roles; a chance to drive change; and the opportunity to work on a cause that matters to you.**

Charities do not seek to make profits, and are usually funded through donations and grants. Social enterprises are businesses which trade for a social/ environmental purpose, reinvesting profits to further this purpose.

There is a huge range of causes served, and workplaces range from small start-ups to big organisations with a more corporate culture. Charities and social enterprises have the same range of job roles as any organisation, such as marketing, HR, PR, IT, project management, fieldwork, finance, policy, and research. Charities often also have an extensive fundraising or 'development' department.

### Getting in and entry points

The following options offer different ways into the charity and social enterprise sector:

- Internships – although paid opportunities are advertised, internships are often offered as unpaid volunteering. If it is not possible for you to volunteer, ask whether there's any way they could make the opportunity more accessible: fewer days or hours, or working remotely to allow you to accommodate other paid work.







- Job opportunities generally will require some previous experience, such as volunteering. Administrative, project or case-work supporting roles can be a way into the sector. Check organisations’ own websites and specialist job sites such as Charity Jobs, Third Sector Jobs, Guardian Jobs, Idealist and Social Enterprise UK.
- Contact organisations speculatively to find short-term roles and entry-level work.
- Graduate schemes are relatively rare, but examples still include Wellcome Trust and Cancer Research UK.
- Some people transfer into the charity sector having gained skills and expertise in a private company first. This is particularly true of roles like accountancy or legal work where the charity or social enterprise might not have the resources to train someone.

- Further study – many roles are accessible without a further degree but this may be important for some roles, such as those in policy.  
If you are considering further study as part of your strategy, it is advisable to:
  - Understand which roles commonly require higher qualifications by reviewing job descriptions and advertisements.
  - Ask people working in your preferred area what qualifications they have and which courses they recommend for entry and progression (if any).
  - Investigate providers and specific courses, including the background of tutors and destinations of recent graduates.

**Extra-curricular ideas**

Relevant experience is usually essential. Here are some ideas to try while you are here at Oxford:

- Explore volunteering opportunities through Oxford Hub, which also offers grants and training for those wishing to try out a social enterprise idea, or find opportunities using [Do It Volunteering](#) or [OCVA](#).
- Join a cause-related student society: get involved in projects and committee or leadership positions, or establish a new society serving a cause you care about.
- Participate in [The Oxford Strategy Challenge](#): charities and social enterprises are among the clients seeking student advice.
- Look out for Oxford Micro-Internships which are often based in social enterprises and charities.
- Get involved with Oxford University Innovation social enterprises.
- Look for the Skoll World Forum activities and the fringe events such as Oxjam.

The ‘learn, do, retire’ model of work is no more and I think now it’s about taking opportunities in their various forms, working hard but staying kind. If you’re looking for experience in the third sector and start-up world, come and volunteer with us.

*Beth Kume-Holland, Founder and Company Director, Patchwork Hub*

**Next steps**

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/charities](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/charities)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/entrepreneurship-social-enterprise](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/entrepreneurship-social-enterprise)



Alumni profile

Zou Xinyi

**What:** After completing my MSc at Oxford, I transitioned into the world of effective altruism (EA), a movement originated by Oxford philosophers. I started at Effective Ventures, rotating within their operations team, before moving to Giving What We Can as an executive assistant to the CEO.

**Why:** While I enjoyed my research project, I craved a more practical application of my skills post-graduation. The EA space offered challenging opportunities that aligned with my desire to make a positive impact. In my current role, I find satisfaction in implementing robust operations infrastructure that supports impactful work.

My journey began with various operational projects at Effective Ventures, including running hiring rounds, assisting with budgets, and developing system automation. Now, at Giving What We Can, I provide executive support and manage operations projects, constantly learning and growing in this dynamic environment.

Working in high-impact non-profits offers numerous advantages, including the opportunity to contribute to meaningful initiatives, collaborate with passionate colleagues, and rapidly develop diverse skills in a generalist role. The sector also often provides good compensation and potential visa sponsorship for international students. However, the work can be challenging and fast-paced, requiring adaptability and quick learning.

**Advice:** For those interested in a rewarding generalist career path, I highly recommend considering operations in high-impact non-profits. And really utilise the Oxford Careers Service – the team’s support was invaluable during my job hunt. Don’t be discouraged by rejections; persist and apply for opportunities that seem daunting. Leverage your academic skills, as research abilities and clear communication are highly valued in most fields.



Position

Executive Assistant, Giving What We Can.

Background

MSc Education (Digital and Social Change), Kellogg College, 2022.

Alumni profile

Jessica Kaye

**What:** In my role I help students to find volunteering opportunities that work for them. This includes programmes run by the Oxford Hub as well as a variety of charities across the city.

This is the first ‘grown-up’ job I’ve ever had, and to be able to work for an organisation making a difference in a city that has given so much to me has been incredibly rewarding. I am enjoying this learning experience and really believe in the work my organisation is doing. I’ve really enjoyed being able to keep strong ties with the University, having loved my time there, and helping other students to get more involved in their wider community has been amazing.

**Why:** It was always my plan to work in the charity and non-profit sector. I wanted to put the skills and knowledge I developed in my degree into making life better for everyone. Non-profit work is a great way to learn more about the communities that we live in and what we should be doing to change things. I was attracted to the idea of working at a local charity because it has given me the opportunity to see exactly how much impact volunteering can have. I am so happy that I have taken the first step towards what will hopefully be a long career of enacting positive change.

**Advice:** Get involved – there are so many societies at Oxford and joining them can enrich your time at university while giving your CV a boost.

Volunteering is an incredible way to get involved with the wider community. Oxford can seem like such a bubble and spending time with like-minded people who also care about their local area is a great way to get out of that bubble, meet new people and gain some skills.

Don’t reject yourself – always go for what interests you, even if you’re not sure if you will be successful in an application, and if you do get the rejection then move on to the next thing.



Position

University and Community Partnerships Manager, The Oxford Hub.

Background

BA History and Politics, University College, 2023.

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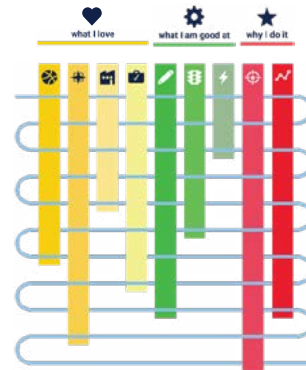
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Sector Briefings: Consultancy 103

# Consultancy

**Management consultancy offers variety, intellectual challenge and the chance to work in high performance teams with a range of clients.**

Critical skills include teamwork and communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, business awareness and the ability to deliver results.

Consultants help client organisations improve their performance by, for example:

- assessing the business case for new products or expansion to new markets,
- advising on scaling back, closing operations, reorganisations and cost-cutting, and
- all points in between, such as improving systems and processes, and building better teams.

Graduates are expected to be active and productive in projects from the start and can quickly gain experience across a wide range of industries. However, new entrants should also expect long hours, extensive travel and lots of time working on spreadsheet analyses and presentations.

Consulting firms range from large, multinational firms working across many fields, to niche consultancies that may focus on a specific sector (for example, healthcare, media or financial services) or specialist area (such as, IT, digital transformation, people and performance). Broadly, firms work in two ways:

1. **Strategy consultancy:** Understanding and finding solutions to strategic problems faced by an organisation: for example, understanding competitors; the market; and/or future drivers of growth. Projects tend to be fairly short, and roles often involve significant travel.
2. **Implementation consultancy:** Developing a strategic idea or solution and making it a reality. Projects tend to be longer than in strategy consultancy and consultants are often based at the client organisation and ensure

Voluntary, short-term learning and development opportunities available in the vacation periods.

Micro-internships last between two and five days and take place either remotely or in person.



## Micro-Internship Programme

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/micro](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/micro)





that all elements of a business – people, technology and processes – come together to deliver a successful outcome.

**Getting in and entry points**

Competition can be fierce and the assessment process is rigorous, typically including aptitude tests (online) and several rounds of interviews and/or an assessment centre, plus partner interview. Once the process starts it can move quickly, so prepare thoroughly in advance. Use individual firms’ websites to understand their recruitment processes and timelines, and plan ahead.

For full-time positions, applications at most firms open in August or September and close in October. A few firms recruit all year round or on a 'rolling basis', reviewing candidates and filling positions as applications are received. Firms usually only allow one application a year, and when applying for consulting at the Big 4 professional service firms this means deciding whether to apply for their ‘management consulting’ or ‘strategy consulting’ practice.

Internships are not offered universally (application deadlines fall between November and January), but are becoming more common. Commercial work experience in any sector can help students acquire and display relevant skills and enhance business awareness.

**Case study interviews** are central to the process. ‘Cases’ challenge you to show you can think through business problems like a consultant. Generally, you will need to do a good job on every ‘case’ and an outstanding job on a couple of them:

- Read our guidance [www.careers.ox.ac.uk/case-study-style-interviews](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/case-study-style-interviews).
- Attend case study workshops at the Careers Service, with student societies or run by companies.
- Practise a lot.

**Extra-curricular ideas**

- Become active in a student society, such as CapitOx, the Oxford Strategy Group, Oxford Women in Business or the Oxford Guild.
- Check out the The Oxford Strategy Challenge ([TOSCA](#)), a team-based, experiential learning event. TOSCA is an opportunity for you to gain hands-on experience with local organisations, where you can build business skills and



commercial awareness. You’ll work in a team on a project that’s important to the organisation.

- Work as a consultant with societies: for example, Oxford Strategy Group, Oxford Consulting Initiative, Oxford Development Consultancy, Enactus or 180 Degrees.
- Consider completing a [Micro-internship](#), a 2–5 day voluntary learning and development opportunity with a range of organisations, where you will have the opportunity to observe and assist a notable project.
- Get involved with activities that provide business insight, teamwork and demonstrate impact, such as, leading on sponsorship for a student society, or participating in team sports or outdoor pursuits with different people, managing a recruitment drive for a society or improving an event or activity within your college.

**Next steps**

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/management-consultancy](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/management-consultancy)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/management-consultancy-beyond-the-obvious](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/management-consultancy-beyond-the-obvious)

Alumni profile

# Rachel Marks

**What:** CIL is an international strategy consultancy with offices in London, Frome (near Bath), Chicago, Munich, and Paris. Many of our projects involve an M&A (Mergers and Acquisitions) element, primarily to provide growth strategy support to leading private equity firms. As the company is sector-agnostic and works on projects that are four to six weeks in length, I’ve worked on a broad range of topics with different people across the company each time.

**Why:** I wanted a strategy role that would provide me with early client-facing and managerial responsibility, and a friendly and approachable workplace with opportunities for rapid career progression. Before applying, I was impressed by CIL’s ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) initiatives and its emphasis on social mobility. Once I entered the company’s recruitment process I was assigned a mentor (a new analyst who had recently been through the process themselves) and this massively influenced my decision to join. Having conversations with a current CILer helped me visualise what my time at the company would look like – from the opportunity for international secondments to the varied work I’d be doing with project teams.

**Advice:** Make sure you know exactly what you’re applying for – every consultancy is different in terms of size, values, and work. The end goal of your applications isn’t to get an offer, it’s to join somewhere long-term; make sure you’ll be happy where you end up. If you can, reach out to someone within the company you’re applying to so you can learn more and find out if it’s a good fit.

Give yourself the best chance of getting an offer – attend as many networking events as you can and reach out to the people you meet afterwards. Make sure you practice case studies and interviewing with others who are applying to consultancies (and that you give each other honest feedback!). Use your careers department – they will give you clear advice and help you track down the workshops and company talks that can make all the difference.



**Position**

Consultant, CIL.

**Background**

BA Philosophy, Politics and Economics, St Hilda’s College, 2020.

Alumni profile

# Dr Holly Jenkins

**What:** Lifescience Dynamics is a leading pharmaceutical consultancy firm with an HQ in London and offices across the US and Canada. As part of working at Lifescience Dynamics I get to work alongside multinational/cross-functional teams that span a wide range of therapeutic areas including immunology and neuroscience. At any given time, I typically work on three to four projects which can vary in length from year-long projects to three-month deep dives.

**Why:** Following my PhD at Imperial, I moved to the Women and Children’s Department at King’s College London where I completed a two-year post-Doc position. Although I thoroughly enjoyed my time in academia, I knew that I wanted to move into a job that allowed me to work across different areas and not solely focus on a single topic for a dedicated time period. I also wanted to gain experience working in a corporate setting where I would be able to learn and develop new skills as well as get involved in solving real-life client problems. When I first ventured into looking at consulting jobs it was slightly overwhelming as there were (and are) so many different options! I found talking to people in my network as well as attending career fairs super helpful prior to making the transition.

**Advice:** For those considering a career in consulting I would suggest reaching out to as many people as possible, whether that be through LinkedIn, networking/careers events or even family friends, to talk about what they do in their day-to-day life. People are always happy to chat! As every consultancy firm is different its super important to gain an understanding about the type of work being conducted before investing time and effort into a job application, so make sure you ask lots of questions. It’s also important to identify whether the company aligns with your ethos, values and aspirations. I would also capitalise on any career related events, courses and/or company internships (there are several great opportunities online!)



**Position**

Senior Business Analyst, Lifescience Dynamics.

**Background**

PhD Neonatal Medicine, Imperial College London, 2018.



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# Creative industries

**Roles within the creative industries are extremely varied and encompass many sub-sections. During this briefing we will focus on the most popular amongst our students; the Fashion Industry, Games Industry, Media and Journalism, Performing Arts and TV and Film.**

**F**ashion – Roles within the fashion industry are extremely varied and it is important to remember that there is more to a career in the industry than fashion itself. Roles within the industry include everything from buying, merchandising, sourcing, finance, design and garment technology, retail management, photography, event planning and lots more.

Gaming – The aim of this industry is to develop, publish, and distribute video games and interactive experiences across all digital platforms. Roles can be found within, but not limited to, animation, audio, game design, production, programming, and quality control.

Media and Journalism – Journalists, broadcasters and directors form the public face of the sector, but there are many other roles. Researcher roles are popular entry points for Oxford graduates: these can involve fact checking content and finding people to appear in programmes. The impact of digital media is redefining both journalism and broadcast content, and having an awareness of multimedia platforms and tools is now crucial for graduates seeking to enter this sector.

Performing Arts – Roles within performing arts can be either performance (musician, actor, dancer etc.) or non-performance (set designer, sound technician, talent agent etc.) based. Whichever route you decide, you can be sure to use your creativity and technical ability. Most performance roles will be on a freelance or fixed term basis.

TV and Film – The number of different types of jobs is immense, spanning all parts of the production process from commissioning, development, production, post-production and through to distribution. Like the performing arts industry, roles within TV and Film are increasingly becoming 'freelance' or fixed term contract opportunities.

Remember, creativity can take many forms, so you might also like to see information on working in Advertising or Culture and Heritage – or any of the many other sectors which employs creatives!

## Further study

Further study may be needed for certain careers within the industry that require technical ability before you can undertake a particular role. Depending on the course, completing further study might present you with the opportunity to complete work experience as part of your studies, for example, the NCTJ for journalism, or the NFTS for people with some film and television experience. In addition, completing a final performance as part of further study within performing arts will expose you to leading talent agents within the industry, though this itself is not a guarantee that you will secure an agent. It is important to do research and weigh the costs and benefits for individual situations: some people recommend them as a way to gain contacts and experience, but others do not consider them as necessary.

## Getting in and entry points

Competition for positions can be high, so relevant experience is vital. Most people need to start in an entry level position, often as an intern or a 'runner', for example. To gain this initial experience, think about advertised internships and short-term seasonal jobs which can provide you with great experience. In addition, both paid and unpaid roles such as work staffing festivals and events; front-of-house or promotional work; game testing, support for tours; and summer work with children and young people can provide great experience.

Furthermore, it is important to establish and cultivate professional contacts because those interested in this sector will often need to find (or create) their own openings by contacting individuals and organisations directly. See our advice on networking and speculative approaches, and take steps to develop and cultivate your contacts – some great opportunities can arise this way.

- For industry specific insights and roles see:
- Gaming, TV and Film – [www.screenskills.com](http://www.screenskills.com).
  - Media and Journalism – [www.journoresources.org.uk](http://www.journoresources.org.uk) and [www.theunitlist.com](http://www.theunitlist.com).
  - Fashion – [fashionunited.uk/career-centre](http://fashionunited.uk/career-centre).
  - Performing Arts – See [www.thestage.co.uk](http://www.thestage.co.uk). For performance-based roles, you can attend open auditions that do not require an agent. Details can be found on the Stage. Should you wish to work as a professional actor, you will need an equity card ([www.equity.org.uk](http://www.equity.org.uk)).
- For a regularly updated list of jobs and internships within the creative industries see [creativeopportunities.arts.ac.uk](http://creativeopportunities.arts.ac.uk).

Extra-curricular ideas

- Plan ahead to get an edge on the competition after graduation by accumulating experience whilst at Oxford.
- Join a relevant society, such as the Fashion Society, Film Making Foundation, OUDS or TAFF (for theatre designers and technicians).
  - Write a blog and/or produce video or comment pieces for other websites/products on topics of interest. Document your work on your own webpage.
  - Take every opportunity to contribute to all things creative at university: student newspapers, Oxide Radio, perform in showcases, open mic nights and productions.
  - For graduate careers in both journalism and fashion, candidates will need to build a portfolio of samples of your published writing/work, and a good record of relevant work experience.
  - Shoot your own documentary, short-film (on your smart phone), direct, produce, act, etc in a stage play.
  - Design aspects of a game (demonstrating your ability in the area of gaming you wish to go into).

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/acting](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/acting)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/communications](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/communications)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/culture-heritage](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/culture-heritage)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/games](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/games)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/journalism](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/journalism)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/music-and-radio](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/music-and-radio)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/tv-film](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/tv-film)

Alumni profile

Dr Fiona Whitehouse



**What:** I’m an artist, with a practice rooted in painting, exploring memory, landscape, and our connection to place and nature. Alongside exhibiting my work, I teach 15th Century Venetian Painting in Venice on an annual basis. I am also the head of the University of Oxford’s Internship team, where I help facilitate meaningful work experiences for current students.

**Why:** Art has always been an anchor for me, both in terms of helping me understanding and expressing something felt but hard to articulate. I studied BA Fine Art and Italian at Exeter University, MSt History of Art at the University of Oxford, and completed my doctorate on 15th Century Venetian Art in London. I worked in other fields for a while, including high tech, but painting kept drawing me back. In my thirties, I found a career in higher education that turned out to be a great fit.

Because I work a slightly reduced week (90%), I can juggle the different task and demands of being an artist with working with students. Being at Oxford helped me develop the kind of curiosity and independence that both my roles now demand, whether I’m working in the studio or setting up internships in China.

**Advice:** There isn’t one ‘right’ path, which can feel both freeing and daunting. For a long time, I thought I had to pick a single identity or direction (and I didn’t choose well at first). Over time, I’ve come to value the richness of a portfolio career, where different parts of your life can support and shape each other.

If something keeps drawing you in, find ways to keep it in your life. Don’t be afraid to let your interests shift or grow. Keeping a creative practice alive alongside other work can be both grounding and full of unexpected opportunities.

Position

Head of the Internship Office, Oxford Careers Service.

Background

MSt History of Art, Worcester College, 1997.



## Alumni profile

# Isabella Thorneycroft



**What:** As an artist coordinator within the classical music industry, I am responsible for the day-to-day management of the careers of several international soloists/conductors. Once my managers (the ‘agents’) have booked a concert into the diary, it’s over to me to negotiate the contract, plan the travel and logistics, apply for visas, and manage the finances. The fact that the role involves such a variety of tasks means that I’ve developed a wide range of experience which I feel confident could open doors to many other careers.

**How:** My original plan was to pursue a career as an orchestral musician. After graduating from Oxford I began studying for a master’s in flute performance at the Royal Academy of Music, London. After several months I decided to step away from this path and explore what else was out there. A number of job applications and one very useful session with the Oxford Careers Service later, I landed my job at HarrisonParrott.

**Advice:** One of the biggest lessons I’ve learnt as a result of my pivot from performance to business is that when considering a career, it is just as important to consider the day-to-day lifestyle it will afford you, not just the content of what you’ll be doing: are you someone who thrives on an irregular and more variegated schedule and having the independence to curate your own diary, or do you prefer the stability of a regular schedule and income, and a clean separation between life and work? I am really glad that I have had the opportunity to try them both – I think I would have always wondered ‘what if’ I had only ever pursued one!

**Position**

Artist Coordinator,  
HarrisonParrott.

**Background**

BA Music, Hertford College,  
2023.

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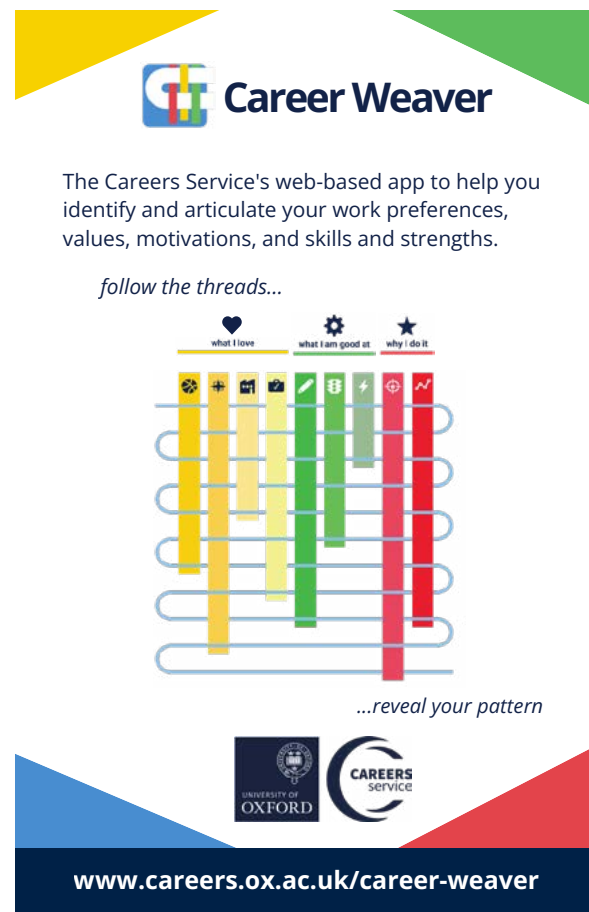


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# Culture and heritage

The sector covers a huge range of roles including artistic (e.g. design, performance) management and administration, teaching, research and training.

Culture & Heritage jobs can be found in a wide range of organisations such as museums, galleries, auction houses, academic institutions, historic sites and many more specialist organisations.

Employers in this sector often rely on candidates to seek them out, and there are very few graduate schemes.

- The vast majority of roles are advertised as individual opportunities – check organisations’ websites, as well as sector-specific job sites.
- A very small number of graduate schemes exist, however they are very competitive and often only recruit a few graduates per year.
- Don’t just consider the big names. There are hundreds of smaller organisations, which often attract less competition. If you love the work of a particular organisation, then sign up to their newsletter for up-to-date information.
- Think about your local organisations and research within your region.
- Consider gaining experience with organisations providing specialist services to the culture and heritage world: for example, art investment, specialist legal and insurance firms, marketing and PR firms, specialist IT or training companies, public sector bodies and charities.
- It’s also sometimes possible to move into the sector after gaining experience in another sector, e.g. law, accountancy, business strategy – culture and heritage organisations also need lawyers and accountants!

[See the Careers Service’s briefing for more on specific roles](#), ideas on how to build experience, and links to external resources.

**Further study**

You don’t need a PhD to work in the sector although it’s a requirement for some research and curatorial roles. Further study (including master’s courses) may help you to develop subject expertise that can make you stand out in a competitive market. It is important to research courses thoroughly before signing up, so consider the following:

- Browse job adverts to understand which roles commonly require additional study and which qualifications are sought.
- Investigate career destinations of graduates, and tutors’ backgrounds, for courses you are considering.
- Ask alumni and others working in your preferred field which courses they took (if any) and/or which are the most respected.

**Getting in and entry points**

Competition for positions can be high, so relevant experience on your CV is vital. Consider:

- Volunteering with local culture and heritage organisations – seek out local museums (for example, [www.museums.ox.ac.uk](http://www.museums.ox.ac.uk)) and heritage organisations, such as Oxford Preservation Trust.





- Advertised internships and short-term seasonal jobs offer great experience, paid or unpaid (for example, paid work staffing festivals and events; front-of-house or promotional work; support for tours; summer work with children and young people).
- Asking directly about jobs, internships or volunteering by networking and speculative approaches to organisations, even if there is nothing on their website.
- Positions may not be advertised widely (or at all!) so check websites and approach individual organisations directly.
- Create your own professional portfolio/blog to document your creative work and interests.

Extra-curricular ideas

Take advantage of the rich cultural life of Oxford and the University to try things out. For example:

- Join community arts projects: for example, explore [www.oxonarts.info](http://www.oxonarts.info)
- Take part in the TORCH (The Oxford University Research Centre in the Humanities) [Heritage Pathway Programme](#).
- Try arts production or marketing; run events as ‘entz’ officer for your college.
- Submit articles for arts, culture and heritage sections of student newspapers.
- Start something new: for example, establish a performance group; create a heritage-style ‘audio guide’ to your college; write a blog.

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/culture-heritage](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/culture-heritage)

Alumni profile

Archie Williams

**What:** I catalogue and research the art that our department handles to prepare them for sale. Provenance research is an important part of my job, making sure lots have been legally exported. Since our department is small, I also help organise marketing, arrange lots on the view and communicate with clients.

**Why:** Working for a gallery or auction house is a good way to continue to learn about a topic or field while earning more money than you would in many museums. Be aware that even if you are a specialist, it is fundamentally a corporate job. You might find yourself having to rein in your research to meet other deadlines, or research material you don’t find so interesting.

**Advice:** The specialist knowledge from my MPhil gave me an advantage when I applied for the cataloguer position. In my interview, specialists showed me different objects and I had to tell them what they were and what they were worth. Though I had some knowledge, lots of the objects were a complete mystery to me – especially the carpets. Be confident in what you know, honest about gaps in your knowledge, and proactive about filling them.

All auction houses have public views where you can see what will be sold and get a sense of how the market works. If you can’t make it to a sale, then read the catalogues online, and make sure you go into an interview able to talk about what had been on the market recently, what it made, and why.

Remember that beyond Christie’s and Sotheby’s are a lot of smaller auction houses, galleries, and dealers who may have openings for permanent positions, internships, or work experience. Be confident about asking people for advice. The art world is built on personal relationships, but a lot of the big players get where they are because they love art and talking to people who share their interests. Find trade events or fairs and go to them.



Position

Cataloguer (Islamic and Indian Art, Rugs and Carpets), Christie’s.

Background

MPhil Islamic Art and Architecture, Wolfson College, 2022.



Alumni profile

# Dr Rachel Delman

**What:** I am responsible for fostering and nurturing mutually beneficial relationships between academic researchers and external heritage organisations. I work with researchers and professional services staff, and with the research and curatorial teams within the various heritage organisations we collaborate with, to identify the most promising avenues for sector-facing research. I am often in meetings with Oxford and sector colleagues or supporting the design of projects and funding applications. I also actively publish as an academic historian of the late medieval and early Tudor period.

**Why:** I first came to Oxford in 2013 to pursue a doctorate in history, following degrees at the universities of Nottingham and Cambridge, and almost a year as a library assistant at Cambridge University Library. Post-doctorate, I held research fellowships at the universities of Edinburgh and York. Despite having a traditional academic career path, I was always interested in public-facing research, seeking out public engagement and knowledge exchange opportunities with heritage organisations, the media and local history groups. My work at the intersection between academia and heritage brought me back to Oxford in 2022, when I began my current role.

**Advice:** The heritage and academic sectors are notoriously competitive, so you need to make yourself stand out. As subject specialists, our academic expertise can often feel niche, but we have a lot to offer, especially when we adopt a flexible and creative approach. I spent much of my early career moving around the country on fixed-term contracts, which is not desirable or possible for everyone, but I was proactive in using these opportunities to acquire skills, training and knowledge in line with my career ambitions. Short internships and placements can be a great way of gaining insights into the sector you want to work in and can serve as a springboard for developing knowledge, networks and further opportunities.



**Position**

Heritage Partnerships  
Coordinator, University of Oxford.

**Background**

DPhil History, University College,  
2017.

# Education

Education is one of the most popular sectors for Oxford graduates. Diverse areas including publishing, policy, administration, charities and NGOs, psychology, arts and heritage and academia may be relevant if you’re interested in education. Here we look at teaching.

Teaching demands communication skills, energy and a commitment to inspire students. It offers an opportunity to make a difference, to use your subject and to advance your career in a variety of directions.

Teachers can rapidly specialise into managerial, pastoral or training roles in schools. Many also move into education roles in other areas.

**Getting in and entry points**

Teacher training options divide into two main types:

**School-led:** One- or two-year programmes based in school, some salaried, others funded by loans and bursaries. Examples are: Teach First, School Direct, Researchers in Schools, some School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), Premier Pathways, Engage Education, and some independent schools.

**University-led:** Usually one-year programmes based in university but with extended periods in partnership schools. For example, PGCE, PGDE, SCITT. Funded via bursaries (level varies with teaching subject) and tuition fee loans.

Whichever route you choose to follow, it is important to gain some relevant experience prior to application.





Applications for most UK teacher training courses are via the Department for Education Apply portal; others take direct applications.

There is no formal requirement for a teaching qualification in the independent sector and some will employ new graduates and offer on-the-job training. Others recruit recent graduates through graduate assistant roles, particularly in boarding schools. CareerConnect and the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) are good sources of vacancy listings for independent schools.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and private tutoring are popular short-term occupations on leaving Oxford, but can also be longer-term careers. A degree from Oxford may be the only qualification needed for some teaching jobs, but experience is always helpful for applications, and a TEFL qualification may make it easier to find work abroad.

There are a few graduate training programmes in education policy and administration, some are run by universities. For example, Imperial College has a long-standing graduate management and finance scheme. Education policy could form part of the Civil Service Fast Stream or local government schemes such as the National Graduate Development Programme. The TES and the Guardian are key publications for opportunities in the education sector.



Extra-curricular ideas

- Observe teachers at work in local schools. The government-run School Experience Programme offers time in schools. Alternatively, approach schools directly to ask if you can observe lessons, or help in other ways.
- Get international teaching experience in the summer vacation through The Summer Internship Programme.
- Volunteer your time with local children through organisations such as Jacari, KEEN, Splash at Oxford or Oxford Hub’s Schools Plus programmes.
- Develop pastoral skills by helping with Oxford University Scout & Guide Group, or volunteering with Sexpression Oxford to promote sexual health.
- Offer mentoring for UNIQ Summer School participants, volunteer with Oxford University Admissions or work with Target Schools to promote access to university, or with OxFizz to give interview practice, mentoring, or to run summer camps.

Moving into teaching has been the best career decision I could have made. It was challenging to begin with but I’m so glad I embraced it and gave it a go. That sense of unfamiliarity soon wears away and you feel like you can really make a difference.

*Saskia Geddes, BA Modern and Medieval Languages (Spanish), St Peter’s College, 2022; Secondary Maths teacher with Teach First*

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/tefl](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/tefl)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/teaching-in-schools](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/teaching-in-schools)



Alumni profile

# Charlotte Rixon

**What:** Immediately after completing my physics degree here at the University of Oxford, I started my PGCE. This is a postgraduate certificate in education through which I will gain the Qualified Teacher Status required to teach in secondary schools.

Unlike some PGCE courses, the course involves three days per week in a placement school and two days at the university during the first term. The second term is spent full-time in school, and the final term is spent in a different placement school. For me, this meant I could fully integrate into my first placement and make the most of my learning there, then fine-tune my practice and explore new teaching approaches.

**Why:** I knew early on that a desk job was not for me. Teaching was something I had always been interested in, and throughout university, I loved sharing my love for physics. Seeing students become excited about and successful in your subject makes every day worthwhile. Every class and every student are different, so there is always something new to be learned. There are so many ways to progress in your career in education, whether that be in pastoral work, curriculum leadership or SEND provision.

**Advice:** My number one top tip would be to get some teaching experience. This could be through volunteering, tutoring or teaching assistant work. These experiences will not only help you to develop useful skills but also help you learn what it takes to work in a school. Some days are challenging, and you can be working long hours, but it's so worthwhile once you are used to it.

When preparing for an interview, focus on the attributes and experiences you can bring to teaching. Confidence in knowing what you're doing and why you're doing it will go a long way, both at the interview and in the classroom. Every teacher has their own personality and style and staying true to yours whilst remaining open for growth will make for a much more enjoyable experience.



**Position**

Trainee Secondary School Science Teacher (PGCE).

**Background**

BA Physics, Lady Margaret Hall, 2024.

Alumni profile

# Saskia Geddes

**What:** I'm in my first year of training with Teach First to become a maths teacher. This is a programme in which graduates are trained on the job to become inspiring teachers in disadvantaged UK schools. This involves teaching in the classroom from day one whilst also completing a PGDE (Postgraduate Diploma in Education). I'm currently teaching at a mixed secondary school in North Kensington, where I teach 19 lessons a week to 11 to 16-year-olds. I completed five weeks of online training during June and July prior to the start of the school year in September. Over an average term, we have three training seminars online and one in-person training day. We also have several observations, essays and reviews over the year, which go towards gaining the QTS (Qualified Teacher Status).

**Why:** I'd never really considered teaching until I spoke to a Teach First rep at the careers fair. My two criteria for a job were not to be sat in front of a desk all day and to help people, so the programme seemed to fit the bill. I applied to teach Spanish and when I was offered to teach Maths I was really surprised. However, I am so happy I gave it a go – now I feel like I'm making a difference to someone's life every day at the school. I have gained so much confidence and people skills, which I believe will help me advance in my future career, whether I decide to stay in teaching or try something else!

**Advice:** The main thing I would advise to succeed in a Teach First application is to get some sort of teaching experience. For example, being a member of the university's mixed lacrosse team gave me the opportunity to coach the women's lacrosse development squad, where I taught beginner players. During my year abroad in Spain, I also chose to work as a teaching assistant of English with the British Council. Through this, I got a good idea of what it takes to work in a classroom. Experience counts – you may even want to drop your old school an email and ask to volunteer there for a few weeks over summer.



**Position**

Secondary Maths teacher with Teach First.

**Background**

BA Modern and Medieval Languages (Spanish), St Peter's College, 2022.

# Energy, sustainability and environment

**From global energy companies to specialist technology firms, regulatory bodies to think tanks, national power generation companies to micro-generation schemes, conservation charities to mining corporations, carbon consultancies to commodities traders: the range of opportunities in this sector is immense.**

Students consider a career in sustainability, energy or the environment for a range of reasons. Many seek to make a positive impact and work for organisations whose values mirror their own.

Environmental-awareness is not limited to careers that are traditionally considered 'green'. Existing businesses are changing – consider the development of electric cars, or moves to increase sustainability in retail. Sustainability is an issue for all sectors; a new breed of firms exploiting the drive for business to operate in a more sustainable way has emerged, but in-house opportunities also exist in large established organisations. This diversity means that well-defined career paths in sustainability can be hard to find. Roles may have sustainability as the core focus, a main responsibility or just a small aspect.

## Getting in and entry points

The diverse nature of this sector is reflected in the wide range of possible entry points. Graduate schemes offered by large companies and multidisciplinary consultancies tend to recruit students from any discipline, with closing dates

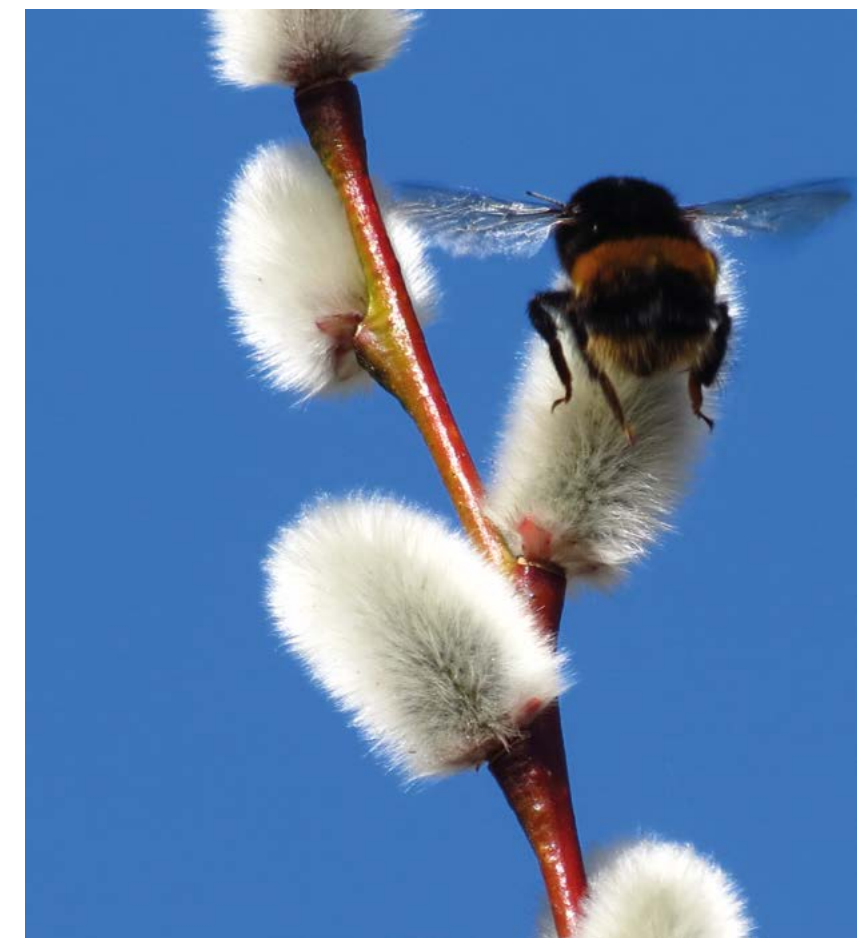
towards the end of Michaelmas term or early in Hilary term. Many also offer internships to students in their penultimate year at Oxford. Look beyond the job title to establish if sustainability is incorporated into a role.

The renewable energy and environmental industries are dominated by small or medium-sized organisations with only occasional vacancies, and may require relevant expertise (perhaps gained through a relevant postgraduate qualification). It is important, therefore, that you take a proactive approach. Research firms that match your interests and connect with alumni working in relevant roles to learn more and build your network.

Build relevant experience to develop skills, showcase motivation and increase your knowledge of the sector and issues affecting it through student societies, volunteering, attending talks and completing internships. The Micro-Internship and Summer Internship Programmes often offer opportunities relevant to this sector and are open to students of all year groups.

Build specialist knowledge and practical experience through your degree by selecting relevant modules, and focus essays, assignments, and projects on topics of interest. These can be communicated in applications.

Employers' responses to questions about their approach to environmental sustainability are available through CareerConnect.







Extra-curricular ideas

- Take an active role in relevant student organisations such as the Nature Conservation Society, the Energy Society, or Oxford SU’s Environment and Ethics campaign.
- Stand for election for your college JCR committee, many colleges have an environment and ethics rep.
- Volunteer with charities such as the Oxford Conservation Volunteers, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, or with sustainability charities that work with Oxford Hub.
- See relevant sectors of this Guide for ideas to develop skills for roles in engineering, finance and marketing. If you are interested in a graduate scheme with a large energy company, see the Developing Core Skills’ advice for ideas on how to develop leadership and organisational skills for project management.

Industry and businesses are increasingly required and motivated to engage with their impact on the environment, and there is huge potential for innovation – so it’s an amazing time to be exploring roles in this area.

*Dr Alice Carrington-Windo, Policy Adviser (EU and Environment), Water UK*

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/energy](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/energy)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/sustainability-environment](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/sustainability-environment)

Alumni profile

# Holly Woodhead

**What:** As a policy principal at the economic regulator Ofwat, I largely lead projects focused on developing the business market for the water industry and protecting customers. I’ve worked on projects enhancing support to vulnerable customers, supporting the rollout of smart water meters to allow better detection of leaks and more accurate bills, and facilitating innovative approaches to water efficiency. As a policy professional, my work involves lots of researching problems, developing solutions, and writing papers to convey these ideas. I also work with water companies regularly, in both industry groups and policy consultations.

**Why:** Like many humanities students, I knew I had a strength for writing critically, and I wanted a career which played to that strength. I also had an interest in politics. I secured a place on the Houses of Parliament Fast Stream and worked in the House of Lords for 18 months. I liked the policy development work, but other elements did not suit my skillset and personality. In moving to a policy job at Ofwat, my role now suits my skills and interests far better. I also really enjoy working in an area which is high-profile and dynamic – water is a massive area of public interest and concern, and it’s a privilege to be part of the effort to transform performance in the sector.

**Advice:** When applying for public sector graduate jobs, I felt there were few options beyond the Fast Stream – in reality, there are lots of schemes if you go and look for them. Particularly look out for schemes at regulators (Ofwat, Ofgem, Ofcom, FCA, CMA, Bank of England, etc) and public sector bodies beyond central government departments (Forestry Commission, GCHQ, ONS).

Internships and micro-internships will help you to gain a greater sense of the skills you’d like to use, and to tailor applications appropriately to stand out in a competitive field. Graduate schemes are a great way to develop skills quickly and enable swift promotion, but don’t feel you need to stay the entire course if it isn’t meeting your needs.



Position

Policy Principal, Ofwat.

Background

BA Theology and Religion, Worcester College, 2021.



## Alumni profile

## Charlotte Whittlesea

**What:** I work at Acorn Bioenergy, a London-based renewable energy developer. We aspire to be the biggest anaerobic digestion company in the UK, supplying biomethane, a green gas for heating homes and biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> from agricultural materials. I started in September 2022, just as the company secured investment from an infrastructure development fund.

**How:** I started to make applications only after my dissertation was submitted, in June 2022. I found myself quite deflated by the overwhelming number of jobs advertised and finding that larger firms filtered out my application as my degree was not directly 'sustainability related'. This prompted me to try a different approach, where I contacted smaller companies directly to advertise that my degree did have a lot to offer. I had more success with this, including securing my role at Acorn Bioenergy.

**Early career:** My job was pacy from the start and I was quickly chosen to coordinate and lead Acorn's PR and marketing strategy.

I'm now working on exciting commercial proposals and researching the biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> markets. Day to day, I initiate discussions with large corporates about how Acorn's nature or technology-based carbon reductions contribute to their decarbonisation whilst also modelling different biogenic CO<sub>2</sub> offtake scenarios. I find the voluntary carbon offset opportunities the most exciting part of my role.

In my experience, small companies offer wide ranging roles and opportunities and although there can be a lack of structure, the level of responsibility and trust from an early stage is something I really value.

**Advice:** Illustrating you have a passion for sustainability and showing confidence in your skillset are the most important mindsets when applying to this field. I showcased my master's – which investigated the effect of microplastics on human health – and completed an internship with a sustainable development charity.



## Position

Renewable Energy Developer,  
Acorn Bioenergy.

## Background

MBiochem Biochemistry, Trinity  
College, 2022.

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# Engineering

**Engineering and skilled engineers make a significant contribution to UK productivity as well as working towards mitigating the grand global challenges of climate change, food security, clean water and energy, artificial intelligence and robotics.**

**T**he engineering sector contributes 26% of GDP to the UK economy which is more than the retail, wholesale, financial and insurance sectors combined, with 5.7 million people employed in the sector across over 600,000 engineering companies.

These companies are projected to have 265,000 annual job openings between now and 2024, and there is currently a shortage of qualified engineers graduating in the country.

The engineering sector includes a wide range of organisations. This includes vast, multinational corporations right down to small, independent engineering companies and start-ups; for example, 58% of engineers are in SMEs with fewer than 250 employees. Some of the biggest recruiters of Oxford engineers are Arup, Atkins, Mott MacDonald, Rolls-Royce, BAE Systems and Jaguar Land Rover.

## Getting in and entry points

For technical engineering roles, a degree in engineering (or sometimes a related subject, such as physics, materials science or mathematics) is usually required, and the average graduate starting salary is around £30.5k. Non-engineering roles in these firms tend to offer similar starting salaries to their competitors in other corporate sectors. Roles are offered year-round, but many of the larger graduate schemes have deadlines closing each year around December/January.

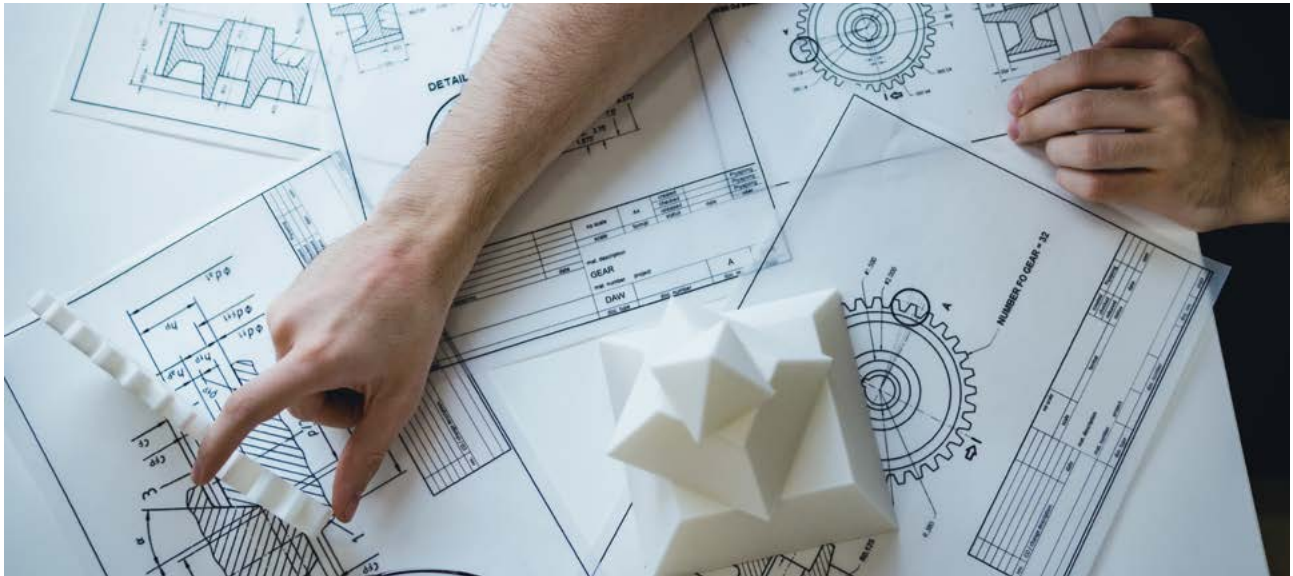
Work experience is important, and it is worth bearing in mind that the engineering science course at Oxford is unusual in not having a built-in period of six or twelve



months spent in industry. However, larger firms (many of which will attend the Science, Engineering & Technology Fair in Michaelmas term) often offer internships that will fit into a long vacation. Smaller organisations are often willing to offer work experience or internships – check on CareerConnect or contact particular firms speculatively to enquire. Internship opportunities are usually advertised a little later than graduate jobs, with deadlines tending to fall from December to February.

## Extra-curricular ideas

- Join Oxford's Engineering Society, Biomedical Engineering Society or OxWEST (for women).
- Join UKSEDS (UK Students for the Exploration and Development of Space).



- Volunteer with Engineers Without Borders during your vacations to build your skills and take part in development projects. A branch has recently been started at the University.
- Take part in Oxford University Racing, run by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, to find the best race car. See [oxforduniracing.com](http://oxforduniracing.com)
- Read, and write a guest post for, *Developing Engineers*, a blog written by young engineers.
- Share your passion for engineering with schoolchildren to also showcase your enthusiasm to future employers. There are a number of outreach programmes organised by professional bodies and the UK government, such as STEMNET.
- Join a professional engineering body as a young member – or represent students on their board.
- Enter the Institution of Civil Engineers’ Communications Competition.

More than 40% of UK electricity is from renewable sources. Energy consumption in the UK peaked in 2005 and is now down to 1994 levels due to energy efficiency. We need Oxford engineers to drive us towards a sustainable future.

*Dr Mike Moss, Career Adviser, The Careers Service, University of Oxford*

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/engineering](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/engineering)  
[www.engineeringuk.com/media/196594/engineering-uk-report-2020.pdf](http://www.engineeringuk.com/media/196594/engineering-uk-report-2020.pdf)

Alumni profile

Dr Olayinka Oduwole

**What:** I work within the mobile private network group at Vodafone, a group responsible for designing a dedicated private network which provides connectivity to enterprises. When I initially joined the group, I worked specifically on the integration of applications which ran over the top of the mobile private network, to provide enterprises with voice applications, and other safety applications, which kept their workers safe whilst working in hazardous conditions. My average week varies, depending on the nature of the project allocated to me and could include stakeholders’ management, customer and market onboarding, product development, documentation etc.

**Why:** I pursued a doctorate degree in engineering science with a focus on solving real world challenges and hopefully translate the research into a solution with real impact on people’s lives. The same goal is evident in my current career choice today, which sees me contribute towards the development of connectivity or solution products for enterprises, with real world challenges a key motivator for my career choice.

A key difference between developing a research solution and product development within my current role is that there is a short time span for the development of a solution for a customer. Typically, in my current role, we aim for a minimum viable product (MVP) whereas in research, you spend a long time attempting to develop a ground-breaking solution. Another key difference is that within my current role, there is a huge emphasis on the customers first; in fact, you begin the product design process with the customer in mind. In research, the emphasis is usually on the research results and publications.

**Advice:** My role is challenging and allows me continually to develop new skills. I work on a wide range of projects which constantly pushes my boundaries. Furthermore, the technology landscape is dynamic and requires the development of new skills to stay relevant. My advice is to pick a job you enjoy so when it becomes challenging, you can find the strength to overcome the challenges.



Position

Product Architect, Vodafone.

Background

DPhil Engineering Science, Kellogg College, 2016.



## Alumni profile

# Dr Maria Lorena Richiusa

**What:** My work supports the mission of delivering commercial fusion power plants for electricity production. Fusion energy has potential to be a safe, low-carbon and sustainable part of the world's future energy supply. I started working at the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) on the Joint European Torus, the first experimental fusion machine, then moved to the design of components for the EU-DEMO, the European future commercial fusion power plant.

I am currently leading the design of plasma-facing components for EU-DEMO, i.e. limiters, which are designed to protect the machine from energy release during disruptive events. As part of an international collaboration involving UKAEA and the EUROfusion consortium, I work with a team of experts supporting the design and assessment of limiters under extreme loading conditions, by means of both analyses and experiments.

**Why:** I have always wanted to become a nuclear engineer, as I am passionate about the mechanisms leading to nuclear energy release – both fusion and fission – which I believe can provide the clean and renewable solution fulfilling our needs of net-zero carbon emission, baseload, and energy security. I am stimulated by new technical challenges, and the international environment around fusion research, which requires a global effort.

Working with different people gives me new ideas to drive my research. I began this work before embarking on my DPhil, and my professional knowledge helped me shape my research project. I am excited to think that, maybe one day, my skills could contribute towards steering national fusion research programmes.

**Early career:** Take the time to understand what you enjoy doing most. This helps keep your curiosity and personal motivation up. Research is not only discovering new things, but also recognizing similarities across multiple fields and models: it is a matter of adapting the equations.

**Position**

Senior Researcher, UK Atomic Energy Authority.

**Background**

DPhil Engineering Science, St Catherine's College, 2019.



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# Health and social care

The UK health and social care sector employs over 3 million people, of whom over 1.7 million work for the National Health Service, and the rest for public sector employers (such as local authorities), the private sector or for voluntary organisations.

The actual array of jobs in the sector is vast, ranging from doctors and NHS managers, to social workers. The allied health professions alone include a huge range of roles such as art/music/drama therapists, dietitians, physiotherapists, radiographers, and speech and language therapists.

## Getting in and entry points

A significant number of Oxford graduates each year study medicine as a second degree. Four-year 'fast track' medical degrees for graduates are offered at several UK universities, with some funding available. Applications for these courses are made through UCAS and close in October, and entry requirements vary: some only accept applicants with a degree in life sciences, some specify certain subjects at A-level. Most use admission tests as part of the application process. Alternatively, you could apply for a second, full degree in medicine through UCAS. These have much more limited funding and therefore tend to be less competitive.

Many of the allied health professions can be entered by undertaking a two-year postgraduate qualification. Use the course finder on the NHS Health Careers website to check entry requirements and available funding. A science degree is normally required, with some exceptions. An alternative option for scientists is the NHS Scientist Training Programme (STP). Workplace-based and salaried, the



scheme trains people to become specialists in various disciplines from microbiology to medical physics. Closing dates are normally early in Hilary term.

Social workers can qualify via either an undergraduate degree or a postgraduate qualification. Frontline's graduate programme ([www.thefrontline.org.uk](http://www.thefrontline.org.uk)) offers a new route into children's social work by providing a paid, work-based course in which participants simultaneously complete a master's in social work. Likewise, Think Ahead ([www.wethinkahead.org](http://www.wethinkahead.org)) have launched a similar course in adult mental health social work.

Students wishing to train as clinical/counselling psychologists in the UK first need to obtain the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC) from the British Psychology Society (BPS). This may be done either through an undergraduate degree in psychology or through a conversion course. Relevant work experience is then required before embarking on a doctorate in clinical psychology (currently funded by the NHS), or a doctorate or qualification in counselling psychology (normally self-funded).

The sector also has graduate management training programmes, which are open to graduates of any degree subject. The NHS programme allows specialism in general





management, HR management, finance management and health informatics. Administrative roles are plentiful, and may be found alongside clinical roles at [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk), or through many private sector websites.

Extra-curricular ideas

- Volunteer with local charities and community organisations to help the vulnerable or disadvantaged. Pastoral experience is useful for all roles in the sector. You could initially do voluntary work on a hospital ward, through student-run community groups, or through Oxfordshire volunteering organisations.
- Get involved in Oxford SU Mind Your Head campaign to promote mental health awareness.
- Become a Student Peer Supporter, a JCR Welfare Rep, or volunteer for Nightline.
- Arrange some work-shadowing in a hospital or health centre if you are thinking about graduate entry medicine.

Medicine is a really interesting career that has many possible avenues to go down – one of the most exciting things for me currently is getting to dip my toe into the various specialties during the clinical rotations. It opens the door to many opportunities...

*Elizabeth Keech, Graduate Entry Medicine, University of Nottingham; BA Modern Languages (French and Russian), Lincoln College, 2020*

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/medicine-as-a-second-degree](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/medicine-as-a-second-degree)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/psychology](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/psychology)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/public-health](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/public-health)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/social-care](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/social-care)

Alumni profile

# Natasha Devaraj

**What:** I am a support time & recovery worker in one of the Adult Mental Health Teams (AMHTs) working alongside mental health professionals to provide support for working-age adults in the community with severe and enduring mental health problems. I provide recovery interventions based on person-centred goals, such as improving independent living skills, guided cognitive self-help strategies and structured behavioural exercises like exposure response prevention.

**Why:** My long-term career aspiration is to become a clinical psychologist. The field is very competitive due to limited training spaces, so most aspiring psychologists work as support workers or health care assistants before moving onto more advanced roles like assistant psychologists and research assistants. I have gained experience with many different mental health conditions and have understood how AMHTs function, giving me an idea of what client groups I may want to work with in future.

**Challenges:** The day-to-day of the job can be incredibly tough. I frequently hear about the traumas and hardships that people have gone through, and as a professional we cannot remove these experiences. It’s also important to accept that we cannot force people to make changes or engage in treatment that could improve their quality of life, so sometimes we are unable to change people’s lives in the way we would hope.

**Advice:** If you’re interested in working within mental health, it can be useful to gain experience in social care first. Learning disability charities (e.g. Mencap, KEEN), residential care homes and mental health charities provide opportunities to develop interpersonal skills, emotional resilience and experience of working with neurodevelopmental conditions, dementia and stroke rehabilitation. These are vital transferable skills and can give you great examples to discuss at interview when looking for mental health positions.



Position

Support Time & Recovery Worker, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Background

BA Experimental Psychology, Lady Margaret Hall, 2023.

## Alumni profile

# Elizabeth Keech

**What:** I am currently in the clinical phase of the graduate entry medicine course at Nottingham, which I started in 2021. The course is accelerated, so is only four years compared to the usual five to six, which is great once you've made up your mind that medicine is for you and are keen to get on with it! I became interested in the course in the early years of my undergraduate degree and toyed with the idea of starting again and reapplying for the usual undergraduate route. However, I found out about the graduate version and realised that a good litmus test of my seriousness about the career would be to see if I still wanted to do it after four years of languages – and I did!

**How:** Coming from a non-science background was initially daunting, as I hadn't touched the sciences since A-levels and most universities require graduate entrants to sit an admissions test – either the UCAT or GAMSAT. It took a bit of time and some hard work, but it was doable, and I'm glad to have done something different beforehand since it has kept my interests broad and equipped me with a skillset I might not have had otherwise. I also had a year out between graduating from Oxford and starting in Nottingham, which gave me the chance to do some shadowing in palliative care and geriatrics, work as a domiciliary carer, and work in a COVID vaccine clinic. The beauty of the graduate course is that you can take all of your previous experiences in with you – I found my languages course really helped with learning anatomical terms and communication skills, while the carer and vaccine clinic roles helped build confidence in terms of working in a healthcare setting.

**Why:** Medicine is a really interesting career that has many possible avenues to go down – one of the most exciting things for me currently is getting to dip my toe into the various specialties during the clinical rotations. It opens the door to many opportunities, including travel, conferences, research, and, above all, meeting lots of people from all walks of life. It is not always an easy route to go down, but it is definitely fulfilling, which is something I was sure I wanted from my career.

**Position**

Graduate Entry Medicine,  
University of Nottingham.

**Background**

BA Modern Languages (French  
and Russian), Lincoln College,  
2020.



## INSIGHT INTO PHARMA / BIOTECH

Online event run in which a panel of scientists from a local pharma/biotech company talk about their work both in R&D and science roles outside the lab.

**[WWW.CAREERS.OX.AC.UK/IPB](http://WWW.CAREERS.OX.AC.UK/IPB)**



# International policy and development

Working in this sector involves developing policy, coupled with practical implementation, that empowers people across the globe to improve their lives.

Practice areas are diverse and they encompass governance, healthcare, education, gender, disaster preparedness, infrastructure, economics, livelihoods, human rights, and other associated issues.

You could be working in a think tank that seeks to address issues of global concern; in your country's foreign service to formulate and implement international policy; in the civil service of a regional organisation such as the EU; as a researcher in a political risk or international development consultancy; or in an international organisation (IO) such as the UN or World Bank. Alternatively, you could work for



a global charity (see the charity sector briefing for relevant advice). As this is a popular sector, competition for employment can be intense, but it offers rewarding careers for those who persevere.

### Getting in and entry points

Entry straight from an undergraduate degree can be difficult, as most organisations value specific expertise or transferable experience – whether in the private, public, or charitable sector. However, there are some graduate schemes available, such as the UK Diplomatic & Development Civil Service Fast Stream.

Direct recruitment into a permanent role is also possible into NGOs and think tanks, but most require at least a master's qualification, and sometimes one or two years' work experience. The precise master's course title doesn't always matter, but the course content/modules do. When making applications it's important to highlight the most relevant modules taken and to illustrate that you have very good knowledge of the subject, research techniques, technical skills, geographical regions, and relevant languages. Research-driven organisations and many think tanks may require that you have undertaken further study to the level of a doctorate, as well as having several years of professional experience.

You can spend time at Oxford building up insights into the sector and its range of organisations – both to increase your chances of securing a job and to help you work out which areas and employers are for you. Most think tanks are open to students undertaking short internships with them. These are not always paid, so you may need to try to set up shorter traineeships that you can combine with other paid work. The EU offers longer five-month paid traineeships to recent graduates. Internship schemes with larger international organisations are normally reserved for postgraduate students. Masters' or DPhil students may also be able to find paid part-time consultancy work within international development, or political risk consultancies and think tanks – especially those students with sector-specific knowledge, expertise, and language skills.





You can enhance your ‘insider’ knowledge of the sector and hear of upcoming opportunities by following our networking advice. Talk to speakers and employers at careers events and seminars, and network through LinkedIn, or college development offices.

Extra-curricular ideas

Spend as much time as you can gaining international experience and knowledge. Spend a summer on the Careers Service’s Summer Internship Programme working on a relevant project, building your language skills, and getting to know a region. Also:

- Write relevant articles for student newspapers, journals or blogs, to demonstrate that you can use research to inform and influence opinion.
- Take a course at the Oxford University Language Centre, to develop or improve a second language.
- Join university societies related to development.

A thesis project or one or two longer internships are a great way to set foot into the sector and show how you can add value to an organisation. Top skills required are: empathy; curiosity; creativity; flexibility; frustration; tolerance; and humility.

Janita Bartell, Monitoring Specialist, UNICEF

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/international-development](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/international-development)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/international-law](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/international-law)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/international-organisations](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/international-organisations)

Alumni profile

Janita Bartell

**What:** I support UNICEF’s regional and country offices in Latin America and the Caribbean to collect, report and strategically use data about the situation of children alongside the programmatic work we do to address child rights deprivations.

**Why:** In the day to day, I thoroughly enjoy telling compelling stories through data and supporting my colleagues to make evidence-based decisions, adding analytical rigour to UNICEF’s work. In the big picture, I cannot imagine a better purpose than to help UN member states advance child rights.

**Career path:** I have lived in a diverse set of countries and worked for a range of organisations. This ranged from volunteering in a remote mountainous village in Tanzania, studying abroad in Peru and working for a local NGO in Cambodia, to HQ positions for UN agencies where I gained a global perspective on international cooperation. My career path so far has felt more like a never-ending quest to learn about different contexts, understand the complexities of the field and hone my skills, experience, interests and convictions so that I can make an impact.

**Top skills:** Humility, empathy, curiosity, creativity, intellectual flexibility.

**Pros and cons:** Travelling the world for work is a blessing and a curse at the same time. You’ll see lots of interesting places and meet great people – but you will also miss a lot of birthdays, weddings and funerals.

**Advice:** Firstly, get your hands dirty! Work and live with local communities that you will eventually serve with your work. This might not render you a fancy job title or a brand name on your CV; but it will make you a better professional. Secondly, know the organization you want to work for. The mandate of a UN organisation is very different from that of a local NGO and hence the work will be very different even though they work in the same sector. Finally, home in on what you are curious about and develop your own profile.



**Position**  
Monitoring Specialist UNICEF.

**Background**  
Msc Sociology, St Hugh’s College, 2014.



Alumni profile

# Yujie Shen

**What:** I work in the social dimensions of climate change team at the World Bank. My work focuses on climate change and environmental issues, such as identifying mechanisms to facilitate private investment in renewable energy in emerging markets, and supporting governments to design and implement policies that support a green economic transition.

**Why:** I started my journey in development without realising what I did was in fact development work. Driven by a desire to understand more about the society and people around me, I started volunteering with a grassroots NGO that works with children of rural migrant workers in my home city in China when I was at high school. By the end of my bachelor’s degree, I decided to join a start-up social enterprise working on rural development in China.

At the World Bank I work on an area that got me started in development: building social resilience and inclusion with communities.

**Advice:** Start small and start early. Volunteering with local NGOs helps you get outside of your comfort zone, interact with people you might not otherwise encounter, and develop skills in communication and fundraising which every organisation in development values.

Identify an area you can add the most value. Development work is broad and diverse, encompassing many sectors and thematic areas, such as agriculture, education, governance, and gender equality to name a few. Speaking to professionals working in these areas helps you understand what their work entails and where you can add unique value.

Be clear and specific about what drives you to work in this industry. Having the experience of working on the ground with grassroots organisations and communities can help sharpen your thinking. You can also learn more about the industry by networking with professionals and reading international news. Give yourself time to reflect and clarify your goal.



**Position**

Young Professional, World Bank Group.

**Background**

MSc Sociology, Linacre College, 2021.

# Law

Intellectual challenge, a constantly changing environment and the opportunity to effect change are just some of the characteristics of the roles available within the UK legal sector. Opportunities are many and varied; you could be supporting a vulnerable child, advising a government minister or managing a newsworthy commercial deal.

## Solicitors

The majority (55%) of the UK's 171,761 practising solicitors work in private practice law firms; these vary enormously in size and specialisation. There tends to be a division between firms that serve the needs of commerce and those that deal with clients with personal legal dilemmas. The remaining solicitors work outside private practice partnerships in a whole variety of different businesses and organisations.

### Getting in and entry points

A new system for qualification as a solicitor began in September 2021. The aim of this new system is to open up access to the profession and reduce the costs of qualification. In the new system you will need to:

- Hold a degree (or equivalent) – law or non-law.
- Pass two sets of centralised exams – the Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE) 1 and 2.
- Complete 24 months of qualifying work experience (QWE).

Employers and legal education providers and others are just beginning to integrate these changes into their academic, recruitment and training programmes. You are advised to keep up-to-date with developments by visiting the Solicitors Regulation Authority website and asking law firms



for their latest updates.

Careful research into whether this option is the right career for you is vital. Wherever your final destination you are likely to be investing many hours and considerable dedication to further study and additional qualifications after leaving Oxford. Historically there have been approximately 5,500 training contracts available each year; roughly 90% are offered by private

practice law firms. The remaining positions are to be found in the Government Legal Department, local government, legal departments in industry (known as ‘in-house’) and the Crown Prosecution Service. This landscape may change with the increased flexibility on QWE afforded by the new qualification route. Short periods of paid work experience, known as vacation schemes, are available at law firms during the Christmas, Easter and Summer holidays, as well as opportunities to attend open days. Increasingly, free to access online ‘internships’ are being offered by law firms too. In many firms the formal vacation scheme also forms a vital part of the recruitment process for a training contract.

## Barristers

There are approximately 17,800 barristers at the independent (or self-employed) Bar, practising in 400 sets of chambers across England and Wales. A further 3,116 work in an employed capacity for numerous organisations, including the Government Legal Department and the Crown Prosecution Service, as well as in commerce and industry. Barristers practise in a wide variety of legal areas such as family, criminal, intellectual property and international border disputes. There can be considerable differences in the nature and lifestyle of a barrister’s work; some almost never appear in court whilst others are in most days. Others may spend the majority of their time drafting pleadings and opinions. However, advocacy remains a vital skill for the barrister, and it is one of the most distinctive elements of this role.

## Getting in and entry points

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) have also completed a full review of education and training. This has resulted in some changes to the qualification elements which are designed to improve access, flexibility and affordability. There are three components involved in qualification:

- The academic component. You must have a degree and, if this is not in law, you need to take a law conversion course (such as the Graduate Diploma in Law), which covers the seven foundations of legal knowledge.
- The vocational component. This is to provide you with the specialist knowledge required for practice at the Bar. Previously known as the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC), there is now a greater choice of courses; some are available at a lower cost than before.

Pupillage/work-based component. This is your period of recognised training where you are supervised by a qualified barrister. The majority of pupillages are undertaken with chambers and are divided into two parts (‘sixes’): the non-practising six months, during which pupils shadow a supervisor, followed by six months of practice when pupils undertake advocacy and other legal services. After this final stage of pupillage, a barrister can either apply for a permanent position as a tenant within chambers, or seek a role at the ‘Employed Bar’ (such as the Crown Prosecution Service or CPS) or elsewhere. At every stage of qualification, competition for places is intense. Approximately one in five students who apply for one of the Bar training courses will successfully complete through to pupillage. Careful assessment of your skills, motivations, and academic credentials, combined with detailed research on the role will help you to decide whether this is the right option for you. Many chambers offer a few days of work shadowing in the form of a mini-pupillage, which can be extremely valuable.

## Other options in law

Many Oxford law students decide not to go on to take the professional qualifications to become a solicitor or barrister, but are still keen to utilise their degree and do so through different sorts of legally related work. If, for example, you



are interested in compliance or corporate governance, the role of company secretary might appeal. Secretaries are responsible for ensuring that an organisation complies with standard financial and legal practice, so must have a thorough understanding of the laws that affect their work. If working with individuals or causes is more suited to you, there are options working as campaigners, policy writers or case workers within the third sector, NGOs and government organisations working in areas such as immigration, housing, and many other social welfare and human rights related areas. Perhaps life in academia has caught your attention? If it has, there will be options for you, with the addition of further study, to work in teaching and research within higher education or other legal education providers or research institutes. These are just some of the possible options!

Extra-curricular ideas

- Join relevant student societies, such as the Oxford Law Society, the Bar Society or the Oxford Women In Law Student Society.
- Get involved with mooting competitions or join a debating society.
- Join the [Oxford Law Faculty’s careers mailing list](#) to hear about events, mooting competitions and work experience. Law and non-law students can sign up.
- Volunteer for a not-for-profit organisation to help individuals, such as Citizens Advice or Asylum Welcome.
- If you are a law student, consider the Bonavero Institute Student Fellowships to contribute to a variety of legal organisations or engage with the Pro Bono Publico programme.
- Improve your commercial skills – get involved in one of the Careers Service employability programmes such as The Oxford Strategy Challenge ([TOSCA](#)) or apply for an internship.

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/barristers](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/barristers)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/solicitors](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/solicitors)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/international-law](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/international-law)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/human-rights-public-interest-law](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/human-rights-public-interest-law)

Alumni profile

Ruth Bala

**What:** I am a barrister specialising in regulated lending law (acting for banks and financial institutions against the consumer industry). I am typically in court two or three times per week and I also undertake a lot of advisory work.

**Why:** The area in which I specialise is very technical and I have built up a genuine expertise over my 15 years of practice. Court is tremendous fun and the thrill of cross-examination is unmatched. There is scope to rise quickly and make a name for yourself. The income is very good at the Commercial Bar. Being self-employed means I can work from home a great deal, which helps me to manage childcare and domestics alongside my practice.

**Challenges:** At the Bar you tend to sink or swim. If you develop a busy practice, then the hours can be long and the work is intellectually exhausting. It is unproductive to dwell on losses or get weighed down by pressure from solicitors. You need to maintain a ruthless focus on completing the next case as effectively as possible.

**Advice:** I got a 2.1, but it is easier getting through the paper round for pupillage applications if you have a 1st, especially at the Commercial Bar. Once you are through the paper sift, the importance of your degree classification recedes. Interview processes for awarding scholarships and pupillages have improved over recent years and a lot of weight is placed on your ability to answer problem questions. The competition is intensely fierce and you should have some quality extra-curricular experience under your belt (quantity is less important). Even the application processes for voluntary legal experience can be competitive, so diarise the deadlines for your targeted placements and for applying for Inns’ scholarships.

A colleague once advised me to ‘be the barrister you are’ – that is to say, do not try to model yourself on some perceived notion of how a barrister should speak and act.



Position

Barrister, 4 Pump Court.

Background

BA Classics, Oriel College, 2003.

Alumni profile

# Robert Pieters

**What:** I am a trainee solicitor working at Jones Day, a global corporate law firm.

As a trainee solicitor, which makes up the first two years of your career at a law firm, you have the opportunity to experience a broad range of different areas within the firm, from litigation to M&A (Mergers and Acquisitions), to specialist areas such as competition.

**Career journey:** When I started at Oxford, I never expected that I would become a lawyer. It was through meeting other people who were interested in this career, particularly other non-law students, that I decided to see if a career in corporate law could be for me. While I attended events with several law firms while at Oxford, the skills that could be drawn on from non-legal experiences gained during my studies also proved valuable, such as roles in student societies, JCR committee, or non-legal work experience. After graduating, I was able to take part in a vacation scheme (a two-week internship) at Jones Day, which gives you and the firm an opportunity to find out more about each other. From this, I was fortunate enough to secure a training contract which included sponsorship to attend law school for two years, before starting at the office.

**Top tips:** Getting a training contract at a major law firm can often be a challenging process, so it is always worth remembering that there is no single path to becoming a trainee solicitor. Some people secure a training contract while still studying, whereas others gain experience in other areas before entering corporate law; some people have law degrees, whereas others (like me) studied something else before converting – non-legal experience can be extremely valuable to discuss during the application process. The main piece of advice I would give to all applicants is to take advantage of opportunities to meet people at different firms whenever possible, to find out first-hand about their experiences as lawyers.



**Position**

Trainee Solicitor, Jones Day.

**Background**

BA History and Politics, Keble College, 2019.

Alumni profile

# Amanda Clift-Matthews

**What:** I specialise in criminal appeals before the Court of Appeal, Supreme Court and Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Many of my cases are homicide cases, where I have a special interest in women and children convicted of murder. Being an appellate lawyer allows me to have better control over my time than if I were in and out of Court every day.

**Why:** Over time you get to know what style of advocate that you are and what you most enjoy. This is not a field for someone who is looking to make money. It is a job you do because you believe in it and are dedicated to making the criminal justice system better.

**Challenges:** I found early life at the Bar quite challenging. I was making decisions that affected people’s liberty when I was only 23 years old. Long evenings working on the next case and early starts travelling around the court circuit can be the norm. But I found it, and still find it, an enormous privilege to be able to meet people from all sectors of society and assist them if I can.

**Advice:** Competition for pupillage is intensely fierce. During the initial pupillage sift, our chambers looks for both academic excellence and candidates who have demonstrated genuine interest in their chosen field through part-time or voluntary work, such as working at a law centre or legal charity.

Many chambers conduct blind interviews where each candidate tackles the same set of problems, and the interviewer knows nothing of the candidate’s background. At that stage, whether you are selected is about how agile you are in your reasoning process and how well you answer the questions. Maturity is often an advantage.

Do not be afraid of taking a year out to do some legally related work. If you do not get pupillage first time around, it will only add to your attractiveness as a candidate if you spend the year usefully building up your experience.



**Position**

Barrister, Doughty Street Chambers.

**Background**

MPhil Criminology, Wolfson College, 2023.



## Alumni profile

# Bella Shearer

**What:** I work in the commercial part of the BBC, investing in TV programmes and distributing them around the world. I draft and advise on a range of commercial contracts for the production and financing of scripted drama and comedy TV programmes. I enjoy being part of getting content made that brings joy and entertainment to a lot of people.

**Why:** At university I realised I wanted to practise law but life at a big corporate firm was not for me. I did not set out to work in-house: I came across a BBC training contract opportunity while studying for the Legal Practice Course. I thought it sounded different to anything else I had seen advertised, so I went for it.

I have been at the BBC Group ever since. Multiple roles within the BBC have provided me with the benefit of quite a broad experience, such as attending court for injunction applications, advising documentary makers in the editing suite, and financing some famous titles.

**Challenges:** In my job it is not enough just to be up to date with all the latest legal developments. Key internal decision-makers often seek input at an early stage of deal-making, so I need to apply industry knowledge to provide commercially (as well as legally) sound advice. The media industry and media law change all the time so it can be a challenge to keep up, but I think that is also what keeps it fresh and interesting.

**Advice:** Plenty of people move to in-house roles after qualifying in private practice. Whether you are applying for in-house training or making the jump shortly after qualification, make sure you understand the industry the organisation is operating in.

I found talking to lawyers at career fairs, subject matter talks and networking events helpful when I was a student. Ask lawyers what they do not like about their job as well as what they like about it. This should give you a feel for the industry or corporate culture and whether it is a good fit for you.



**Position**  
Senior Business Affairs Manager,  
BBC Studios Distribution.

**Background**  
BA Jurisprudence, Wadham  
College, 2015.



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Sector Briefings: Marketing and communications 163

## Marketing and communications

**A dynamic, fast-moving and growing sector offering diverse roles across marketing and communications functions, for graduates from all degree disciplines.**

This sector provides all the necessary functions to support businesses to brand and market themselves successfully; from understanding customer needs and desires, establishing and maintaining a differentiated and competitive brand to effectively communicating with various audiences about their mission, products and/or services.

Strong communication skills are essential, not only because effective communication is fundamental to the sector, but also due to its highly collaborative nature. Professionals from diverse specialisms work together to achieve business objectives. Organisational skills are also required to manage workload in this fast-paced sector.

Graduates from STEM subjects and those with strong digital/IT skills are increasingly in demand due to the use of data analytics to unlock insights in customer behaviour, and the potential for application of AI (artificial intelligence) to exploit the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

### Types of jobs

The types of functions and roles that exist within the sector are wide-ranging and interconnected, including:

- **Marketing:** involves developing and implementing strategies that drive brand awareness and sales by identifying and satisfying customer needs and preferences. Key activities can support more strategic, long-term work (e.g. conducting market analysis, new product development or pricing strategies) or more tactical, short-term work (e.g. developing a promotional



campaign or event). Generalist marketers collaborate closely with other marketing and communications professionals – such as those listed below – to implement their strategies.

- **Brand management:** branding work specifically focuses on creating and maintaining a unique identity for a brand and its products and/or services via a clear mission and brand assets (such as naming and visual identity).
- **Research insight and analytics:** provides valuable evidence of people's behaviours, needs and preferences to inform overarching brand and/or marketing strategies, or specific product development or campaign work.
- **Advertising:** the creation of strategic campaigns that appear across media to motivate people to buy products and services, or to alter their attitudes.
- **Public Relations (PR) and Public Affairs:** involves managing and enhancing reputations – of people, organisations, products or services – by influencing key audiences such as the public, media or policy makers. Tools used to achieve this are wide-ranging from press releases to promotional events.

## Types of employers

- **Agencies** employ people in consultancy-style roles, often in a more specialist area of marketing or communications. Work is project based, advising multiple clients on their brands. Agencies can be full-service (spanning the full range of marketing and communications functions) or specialise in a certain area (e.g. digital marketing, insight, events, advertising etc).
- **In-house** roles are focused on activities relating to that company and sector alone; be that technology, retail and FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods), financial services, healthcare and pharmaceutical or charities. In-house roles can vary from more specialist roles in larger companies to more generalist roles in smaller companies.
- **Freelance individuals** have the opportunity to hold temporary contracts with a variety of agencies or directly with companies themselves.

Opportunities exist all over the UK, especially in-house roles. The main cluster of agencies are in London, followed by other cities such as Bristol, Manchester and Edinburgh. Large agencies are often international in scope, some with offices across the world.

## Getting in and entry points

**Agencies:** most small-medium sized agencies recruit into specific roles as positions arise, with few offering specific graduate schemes or internship programmes. Some of the larger agencies offer more formal schemes (such as Ipsos, Kantar, M+C Saatchi Group, FleishmanHillard). Applications for these often open during the summer – deadlines can fall early, some before the end of October.

**In-house roles:** there are many prestigious graduate programmes within larger companies (such as Unilever, L'Oreal, Diageo) – deadlines often fall in November and December. You can also gain experience as an in-house marketing assistant, for example with a charity or technology firm, as a foundation to build on.

Expect competition for advertised positions to be intense. This is a highly networked sector. It is therefore very helpful to be visible and known; work experience is important, and speculative approaches for full-time roles, internships or work experience are often welcomed as they demonstrate interest, motivation and initiative.

As this sector thrives on creativity, think about making your speculative approach a little different too. Not all agencies want a traditional CV, and creative alternatives can sometimes be effective, such as an infographic or videographic CV. A website or blog are good forums to showcase skills, and it is important to use social media to keep in touch with agencies' latest work and to hear first about new opportunities – but candidates are advised to manage their own web-visibility carefully!

## Extra-curricular ideas

- Join the OxAoS or Oxford Media Society.
- Get involved in the marketing of an event, fundraiser, or any aspect of promotion of a student society and enhance your use of social media.
- The Oxford Strategy Challenge, run by the Careers Service, offers first-hand practical experience.
- Stay abreast of the industry through key resources, such as Marketing Week; Campaign Live, and The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) website.
- Stay abreast of the industry through key resources, such as Marketing Week; Campaign Live, and The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) website.
- Apply to be 'brand ambassador' for a recruiter looking to raise their profile at Oxford.

Alumni profile

# Georgina Weetch

**What:** Procter and Gamble (P&G) owns global brands like Oral B and Crest. P&G gives you responsibility from the start and focuses on developing people through on-the-job experience. Consequently, I've had the opportunity to work across lots of different fields in my career (from fabric to pet care) and have worked within various countries. We have a 'promote from within' ethos so most of our senior leaders started as interns or graduates.

**Why:** At A-Level I studied History, Maths and Geography and I've always enjoyed using both sides of my brain. Marketing offers you the opportunity to do that - you need to be able to evaluate great advertising as well as understand business performance.

Growing a brand requires strategic and analytical thinking; working out why your brand is growing (or not) and how to evolve it; emotional intelligence as you work in a multi-functional team; and an eagerness to learn as the landscape continually changes. It's an exciting place to work because standing still isn't an option, so you're constantly thinking on your feet and finding new ways of doing things.

Under my organisation I have grown as a business leader from day one. You're given a household name brand such as Gillette, Pampers or Fairy to grow with the support of a multi-functional team around you.

**Advice:** Use the opportunity whilst you are at university to get involved in societies and clubs to learn and develop leadership skills which you can use in applications. Focus on driving a result and be clear on the contribution you personally drove.

Be honest with yourself about your interests and skills. I thought I 'should' go into finance, law or consultancy as everyone around me seemed to be doing that, but I am glad I was honest with myself. If you've studied a humanities degree, it can be harder to take the leap to a career, as you must focus on skills you've developed in your degree rather than subject experience to lead you.



Position

UK Marketing Director, Procter & Gamble.

Background

BA History, Pembroke College, 2009.

Alumni profile

# Julia Manstead

**What:** I work as a strategist at a creative advertising agency. I look at the intersection between what consumers want or are interested in and how communications can be used to solve a brand's business problem. I also consider how the brand is positioned in comparison to competitors and how the brand fits into wider culture. That means stepping outside my own bubble, reading a wide range of news sources and, crucially, speaking to people (you can only get so far with data). My job is to then collate these insights into an inspiring brief for my creative colleagues to come up with the adverts themselves.

**Why:** The job involves a lot of problem-solving and, much like my languages degree, I love the sheer variety – you often work on multiple accounts, so you get to know different clients and industries. Agency life is also fast-paced, and I find working with creative, collaborative people incredibly fulfilling.

**Advice:** Be a consumer – look at adverts around you and consider what the brand is trying to do. Who are they targeting, what message are they trying to communicate and why? Look up ads that won at Cannes Lions and make a note of what inspires you.

Be curious: Keep your finger on the pulse. Follow topics and trends that interest different sections of the population – whether that's religion, sports fandom, *Love Island* or observing what's happening on the 'other' side of the political spectrum.

Reach out: Look up internships and placements at agencies like Ogilvy, Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH), and adam&eveDDB and reach out to people on LinkedIn to ask if they have time for a chat.



Position

Strategist, Ogilvy UK.

Background

BA Modern Languages (German Language and Literature), New College, 2020.





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Sector Briefings: National policy and government 169

## National policy and government

Working in national policy and government offers variety, new challenges, and opportunities to do something that has a big impact on the public. This page concentrates on the sector in the UK, but much of the advice can be extended to careers across the world.

A career in this sector appeals to those interested in making a social or legislative impact in their home country – working for a political party or think tank or becoming a civil servant at local or national level.

There are currently almost half a million people in the UK Civil Service, working in 250+ departments, services, agencies. Local government is an even bigger employer in the UK, with 1.2 million staff in over 350 local authorities.

Civil servants are officially apolitical, informing and implementing policies of elected representatives. Graduates may also work directly for elected representatives as advisers, researchers and assistants, which can be an effective route into a political career. You could even stand for election as a councillor or MP.

Think tanks are more concerned with policy than politics, but are sometimes aligned with a particular position on the political spectrum. They seek to influence public policy and debate through their research, the media, and via direct contact with politicians and organisations. For more about think tanks see the 'International Policy and Development' section in this Guide.





Getting in and entry points

The Civil Service primarily recruits graduates through its ‘Fast Stream’ – in fact 15 ‘streams’ ranging from Policy, Houses of Parliament, Science and Engineering, to Analytics, or Project Management and the Government Economic Service. The deadline for this falls in early Michaelmas term.

Fast Streamers usually gain experience in more than one government department and in more than one part of the UK and can have opportunities for secondment into the private sector, charities, and other public sector organisations.

Some departments and agencies also run separate direct recruitment schemes, including the Economic Service, Government Legal Profession, HM Treasury, the FCA, ONS, Security Services and GCHQ. Also look out for graduate programmes offered by the Bank of England, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), OfGEM and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).

Individual, graduate-level vacancies in departments will be advertised on the Civil Service website as they arise. Other routes in include temping and short-term project roles.

Internships are not generally offered, apart from the Summer Internship Programme (deadline in October) and Early Internship Programme. Some specialist programmes also advertise internships from January to March. For example, Government Economic Service, Communications, and Operational Research.

In local councils, the Local Government Association runs a two-year graduate scheme: The National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP). This programme aims to provide local government

with high calibre managers, training graduates through a series of placements within councils. Participants can gain experience in policy and strategy, customer-facing roles, and finance and operational positions. Since 2002, over 1,000 graduates have completed the programme, and many now hold influential managerial and policy roles. Direct entry positions can be found on council websites.

The website [www.w4MP.org](http://www.w4MP.org) is the primary jobs board for positions working with MPs, political parties and campaigning organisations. There are also internships, and speculative applications can also work, but many are London-based and may be unpaid.



Extra-curricular ideas

- Stand for your JCR/MCR committee or the Oxford SU executive – or get involved in Oxford SU’s campaigns.
- Enter debate competitions in societies or the Oxford Union to sharpen your communication skills.
- Get involved with your local political party or student society branches and politics-related student societies.
- Join [The Oxford Strategy Challenge \(TOSCA\)](#): Oxford City Council is a frequent client.
- Get involved with student societies and volunteering through OxHub.

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/government-public-services](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/government-public-services)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/think-tanks](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/think-tanks)



Alumni profile

# Estelle Hlustik-Smith

**What:** I am based in Cambridgeshire County Council on the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) for local government: a two-year scheme with different placements every six months within your council. Alongside gaining practical experience, with graduates from councils across the country, you work towards a Level 7 qualification in Leadership and Management. I have completed placements across adult social care, central policy teams and waste management. Through various projects I have developed a range of skills, including strategy creation, project management, behavioural change and community engagement.

**Why:** Approaching the end of my degree, I was still unsure what I wanted to focus my career on, but I knew that I wanted to be making a positive impact. Local government has broad responsibilities from leading renewable energy projects to supporting refugee arrivals, so I knew I could keep my options open. The NGDP allows graduates to have a lot of influence on where their placements are based, which enabled me to explore different career directions.

From this, I have developed an interest working in waste management, creating services which support our residents to get the most out of the planet’s limited resources. I know I am not really helping the stereotype, but I promise that councils do more than bins! I have been given the responsibility to lead projects, developing the skills and experience to accelerate my career in the public sector. Recently, I have secured a role where I will be helping to translate the ambitious national policy changes for the waste sector into reality at the local context.

**Advice:** You select your preferred council in the NGDP application process. Recognise that not all councils are the same, each have diverse residents, different responsibilities, priorities, cultures, challenges, opportunities and ways of organising the NGDP scheme. Understanding this will help you to excel in the final interview and ensure you make a decision aligned with what is important to you.



**Position**

National Graduate Development Programme, Cambridgeshire County Council.

**Background**

BA Geography, St. Anne’s College, 2021.

Alumni profile

# Imogen Resnick

**What:** My team designs policy, develops campaigns, and funds relevant services across London to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls; I lead a range of portfolios including stalking, women’s public safety, and harmful practices against women such as female genital mutilation. It’s challenging and rewarding work that makes a big impact across London – it’s a really exciting time to work in the public sector.

**How:** After graduating from Oxford I entered local government on the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP), which was brilliant for developing professional skills in a structured, supportive environment. On the NGDP, I rotated across different council departments and placements, working with politicians, senior leaders, and citizens. I saw how varied the work of local government is as well as the challenges people face in their lives and how government can help (or hinder!).

**Experience and skills:** Horizon scanning is a key skill – always being on the look-out out for emerging trends, campaigns or developments in legislation that could impact your policy area. Strong communication skills are essential – writing reports and briefings concisely, delivering persuasive presentations, and knowing how to adapt for different audiences. Technical abilities like data analysis are useful, but it’s the ‘soft skills’ like influencing, collaboration, and project management that get you in the door and help build a long-lasting career.

**Top tips:** Help yourself by building up your CV with as much life experience as possible. Try and gain as many transferable skills as you can through work experience, volunteering, or getting involved in a university society. Also, figure out what your skills are, what you need to improve, your values, interests and – importantly – what you’re not interested in. I undertook an invaluable leadership course which helped me reflect on what factors motivate me in a career; Oxford has a wealth of similar opportunities.



**Position**

Policy and Commissioning Manager, London Mayor’s Office.

**Background**

MSc Modern Middle Eastern Studies, St Antony’s College, 2019.



## Careers events

# TERM PLANNER

From insights into a variety of employment sectors to practical skills workshops and inspiring panel discussions, we have a wide range of exciting careers events lined up each term for Oxford University students, researchers and alumni.

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# Publishing

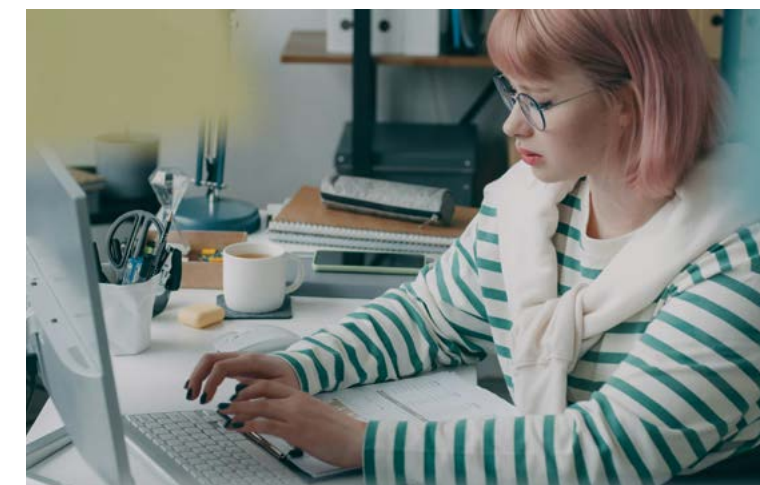
**Do you have a creative mind, a proactive and resourceful nature, good organisational skills and a passion for creating content? If so a career in publishing may be an interesting option for you.**

The UK publishing industry employs 29,000 people directly in the UK and is the largest exporter of books in the world. It divides into three main fields, with academic publishing being the biggest of the three:

- **Trade or consumer publishing:** fiction and non-fiction books that are published through the book trade to a general audience.
- **Academic publishing** makes scholarly research available via texts and journals.
- **Education publishing** produces school textbooks and English Language Teaching (ELT) materials.

There are a huge number of publishing companies in the UK, with the three largest companies (Penguin Random House, Hachette Livre, HarperCollins) taking around half of total UK customers sales. Other large employers include Macmillan, Pearson Education, Oxford University Press (OUP), Bloomsbury, Simon & Schuster, and Wiley, with many other smaller independent publishers.

Generally, the processes of publishing are divided into editorial, design and production, sales and marketing, distribution, contracts and rights, and finance. Specific job functions range from commissioning editor to content editor and





marketing assistant to web developer as the rapid growth of online and digital publishing drives change across the industry.

There are also literary agencies, which act as intermediaries between trade publishers and writers. Normally working in small firms, agents have exposure to the whole publishing process: editing books with authors, convincing publishers to buy them, and dealing with contracts and media enquiries.

Getting in and entry points

A few of the larger publishers run formal graduate schemes. Most, however, recruit graduates for specific entry-level jobs such as marketing or rights assistant, and the majority of people in publishing start in administrative positions and work their way upwards.

For any job, a demonstrated interest in the sector is extremely important, and having relevant work experience can be a real advantage. A few large players offer formal internship schemes, but outside of these, you can make speculative approaches to seek work experience at any publisher.



CareerConnect is a useful source of vacancies for jobs and work experience in the sector. Key external job sites include The Bookseller, Oxford Brookes’ list of publishing jobs and internships (they run three publishing masters’ degrees), and the Independent Publishers Guild (IPG) job board. Many companies, particularly smaller publishing companies and literary agencies, do not formally advertise vacancies, which means you need to get in touch speculatively to enquire and follow their social media pages.

The Publishers Association website [www.publishers.org.uk](http://www.publishers.org.uk) provides lots of information on the industry, roles and careers.

Extra-curricular ideas

- Join the Society of Young Publishers (Oxford). Run by professionals in the sector, it holds regular networking nights and careers events.
- Demonstrate interest by joining other related student societies, such as the Oxford University Society of Bibliophiles.
- Gain experience by working for a student publication, such as, *The Oxford Student*, *Cherwell*, *Isis*, *The Oxford Scientist*, *The Oxford Blue* and so on. Many offer experience in editorial and technical roles.
- Choose a topic you are interested in and blog about it. Developing a regular blog is a good way to demonstrate relevant publishing skills.
- Offer to help in your department or college, for example, to support the production of conference materials and reports, internal documents or promotional material.
- [Sign up for the Careers Service’s Insight into Publishing programme.](#)
- Working in a bookshop will give you useful insights into the consumer market.

Professionalism and a positive attitude can take you very far in any sector - I joined my current employer after a literary agent who interviewed me for another job a few months before recommended me for the role.

Noosha Alai-South, BA French and Italian, Jesus College, 2021; Assistant Editor, Penguin Press

Next steps  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/publishing](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/publishing)

Alumni profile

# Dr Darren Burgess

**What:** I am a senior editor at the science journal Nature, where I am responsible for the articles we publish in several fields including biotechnology, cancer genetics, and genome editing. As editors, we liaise with scientists at international conferences and lab visits, assess submitted manuscripts, organise peer review, and ensure that studies we publish meet our high standards of rigour, advance and impact. Editorial roles involve a lot of multitasking of many manuscripts, as well as diplomacy skills to deal sensitively with scientists of many cultures and backgrounds, from anxious early-career researchers who have never had a high-profile paper, to the confident personalities of many senior scientists who have extensive publication records.

**Why:** After studying biochemistry at Oxford, I had a dramatic change of scenery by taking up a PhD position studying cancer genetics at New York’s Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory: I’d fully recommend pursuing studies in international institutions, as a way of broadening your personal horizons and building a unique CV. After three years of research as a postdoctoral scientist at the Breast Cancer Now research centre in London, I decided I wanted to use my science skills in a much broader way rather than focusing on individual research projects. The main difference between editorial work and science research is breadth: the key to editorial work is being interested in everything and being able to handle manuscripts across a broader range of topics than you were formally trained in.

**Advice:** I’d recommend looking at what the emerging trends are in any given field rather than just trying to follow the same career path as people already in those roles. From my own perspective, I wish I’d pursued more training in computational biology and coding, as it has now become mainstream across many fields I’m exposed to. Likewise, for many roles beyond science, I think that candidates are particularly appealing if they can bring modern skills, such as aptitude in social media and an appreciation of how AI tools can enhance their field.



**Position**  
Senior Editor, Nature.

**Background**  
MBiochem Biochemistry, Christ Church, 2002.

Alumni profile

# Noosha Alai-South

**What:** I’m an assistant editor, helping two editors with their lists, working across non-fiction and the Penguin Classics. I handle administration (maintaining metadata, managing diaries, drafting contract memos, etc), give feedback on proposals, make first-round edits on manuscripts, write copy, clear permissions, find potential endorsers and research possible additions to the list.

**Why:** During my year abroad I did an internship as a rights assistant at a French publishing house, which got me interested in publishing. After graduation I applied for lots of roles across the industry, casting quite a wide net; after two months I found a job as a contracts assistant at Hachette. But I had always been interested in editorial and a month into my contracts job I was invited to apply for an editorial assistant role at Penguin Press. Throughout my applications I had some great sessions with one of the Oxford careers advisers who helped me with everything from CV writing to interview prep.

**Advice:** Read a lot of new releases and engage in publishing as an industry: go to literary festivals, follow publishers, bookshops and authors on social media, and read *The Bookseller* to see what people are excited about in publishing right now. When you start applying, make sure to do your research well – why this specific publishing house? If you manage to get an interview, go to a book shop and skim-read some of their books to get a feel for the list (or listen to the audiobooks which can often be a lot cheaper/free), and make sure you prepare lots of questions to ask at the end. Once you get a job, try to preserve your boundaries as much as possible – beware of doing too much unpaid overtime. In general, be ready for a lot of rejection as entry-level roles in publishing can be super competitive, and be open to roles across the industry – there’ll be lots of jobs that you didn’t even know existed that could be perfect for you.



**Position**  
Assistant Editor, Penguin Press.

**Background**  
BA Modern Languages (French and Italian), Jesus College, 2021.



# INSIGHT INTO PUBLISHING

Three-part programme designed to demystify publishing and increase Oxford University students' understanding of professional life to prepare them for a job in the sector.

[WWW.CAREERS.OX.AC.UK/IIP](http://WWW.CAREERS.OX.AC.UK/IIP)

## Science

**There are many opportunities in this sector, including careers in research, creating new technologies, developing or refining manufacturing processes, or innovating medical solutions. So make sure you quiz Oxford scientists about the options while you're here, as many have connections outside academia.**

Scientists are likely to be involved in research, development and analysis. Opportunities in industry range from the research divisions of global companies to niche technology firms. Other options include government- or charity-funded research institutes, hospitals, and university research.

Science and technology span diverse disciplines and so too does the range of opportunities in the science sector. Roles for hands-on scientists exist in manufacturing, energy, medicine, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, environment, defence, aerospace, transport, electronics, space technology, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), and many more areas.

The sector also needs science literate graduates who can use their knowledge in other ways: for example, making scientific ideas a commercially viable reality, or communicating research to investors or the general public.

You may primarily be driven by your subject interest, but you should also consider the environment that would most suit you. For example, working in a small startup technology company is likely to give a very different experience from joining a large graduate scheme with an established employer.

### Getting in and entry points

The first step for many scientists wanting to pursue a career in science is a PhD (DPhil in Oxford). Do not be put off if a





PhD is not for you at this stage; many organisations offer science roles that do not require a PhD.

In general, only major companies have graduate schemes. The earliest deadlines are in Michaelmas Term, but many recruit on a rolling basis. Gaining employment with well-known firms can be highly competitive (particularly in the pharmaceutical sector) and relevant industry experience is always useful.

Many large firms offer internships to penultimate year students. More opportunities exist with smaller, less well-known companies, which usually recruit for specific vacancies – either directly or through specialist recruitment agencies. Small scientific companies are often clustered on science parks. Check their websites for vacancies, register with relevant recruitment agencies, and also make speculative applications for jobs and for getting work experience.

The availability of work in government agencies and independent research institutes varies according to subject. DSTL (Defence Science and Technology Laboratory) runs

a graduate scheme across most scientific disciplines. DESG (Defence Engineering and Science Group) is focused mainly on physical scientists and engineers. Independently funded research institutes – such as those operated by Cancer Research UK and the Wellcome Trust – are more common in life science disciplines. For some jobs it can be an advantage to have a relevant PhD, and some roles will require them.



Extra-curricular ideas

- Join subject-based student societies, and others such as the Scientific Society, OxWEST (for women) or the Energy Society.
- Volunteer to do outreach work, for example, with your department, Science Oxford or Oxford Hands-On Science (OxHOS).
- Seek a summer research assistant position at your department or through your tutors' contacts.
- Write for *The Oxford Scientist*, Oxford's science magazine.
- Become a student member of a relevant professional scientific society – many offer networking opportunities.

Make the most of expertise around you. Quiz Oxford researchers and lecturers about their career and collaborations – many have connections that reach far beyond academic research labs.

*Dr Abby Evans, Careers Adviser, Oxford University Careers Service*

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/pharmaceuticals-biotechnology](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/pharmaceuticals-biotechnology)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/science-alternatives](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/science-alternatives)  
[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/science-rd](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/science-rd)



Alumni profile

# James Evry

**What:** Medical writers work with clients and expert authors to communicate scientific and clinical data in various formats, including traditional publications for scientific journals, shorter abstracts, posters, presentations for international congresses, and innovative digital media. Our publications can target pharmaceutical companies, healthcare professionals, patients, or the public, so we need to tailor our writing to specific audiences.

**Why:** When I left university I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to use my scientific background and skills. I admit that I hadn't heard of medical writing before I found Costello Medical, but it quickly felt like an ideal fit. Knowing the pieces we write can improve patients' treatment options in the NHS and globally motivates me.

**Career path:** I joined Costello Medical as a medical writer in 2020. I was promoted to senior medical writer in 2021, which meant I was now responsible for training and mentoring junior colleagues and reviewing their work. Since April 2024, I have been a publication manager, which means I am leading internal project teams and external client communication. I partner with clients to decide on project strategies and share them with the team. I am also a line manager and lead business development efforts, adding even more variety to my role.

**Advice:** If you know that medical writing is the career for you, use that to your advantage and network with as many people in this field and learn as much as you can from them. LinkedIn is great for this! Whilst you are still a student, get as much experience writing for different audiences as possible. Is there a student newspaper you could write for? Can you tailor your modules to include more written coursework?



**Position**

Publication Manager, Costello Medical.

**Background**

Msc Zoology, Wadham College, 2018; BA Biological Sciences, Wadham College, 2015.

Alumni profile

# Andy Attfield

**What:** In short, a patent attorney is a kind of 'science lawyer' bridging the gap between engineers, inventors and the legal system, by protecting their inventions. A patent attorney needs to understand both the technology and the law to a high degree. The scientific understanding required comes from a degree: unfortunately, learning the legal side involves a few more exams.

Patent attorneys come in two forms – private practice and in-house, these are flexible throughout your career. In-house is typically more strategic and focused on a few technologies, whereas private practice is often more varied in terms of clients and technology.

Being a patent attorney involves arguing often small but important technical and legal points, so it helps to be somewhat pedantic – if you find yourself frequently saying, “*well, technically...*” in conversation, this job might be for you!

**Why:** The patent profession attracted me for a number of reasons, not least because it paid a lot better than a PhD. Particularly as a private practice attorney, my role requires me to argue technical details about a wide range of technologies, often brand new to me, which keeps the job engaging and variable.

Additionally, the profession is small, with only a few thousand patent attorneys in the UK compared to over one hundred thousand solicitors. Trainees courses and events organised by the Chartered Institute for Patent Attorneys provide great ways to meet people at other firms.

**Advice:** If you have an interest in a career as a patent attorney, many firms offer taster days or summer internships which are a good way to gain an insight into the profession before committing to more exams after uni. You can also look for college or course alumni who have gone on to become patent attorneys and get in contact via LinkedIn – most would be happy to offer their advice.



**Position**

Patent Attorney, Reddie & Grose LLP.

**Background**

MPhys Physics, St Hilda's College, 2017.

## Alumni profile

## Adam O'Connell

**What:** I develop ideas for brands across the Reckitt portfolio, anywhere there is a need for polymer, surfactant, and colloidal formulation expertise. This takes creativity and flexibility, and my daily work varies to suit the project needs: I may read scientific literature and patents to build understanding of a new area, create and characterise trial formulations in our research labs, or collaborate with partners such as universities and private labs where specialised experiments or more open-ended work is needed. I work closely with our other Research and Development specialists to deliver technically superior solutions; our regulatory and safety teams to ensure compliance; our legal and intellectual property teams to secure ownership of our inventions; and our brand teams to maintain alignment with business needs.

**Why:** After the narrow focus of a PhD, it's refreshing to develop a range of personal expertise and work with such interdisciplinary teams. Being quick to learn and able to adapt is key, which suits me well. Scientific challenges pop up every day, and I find the problem-solving required to tackle these highly stimulating. I also enjoy keeping an eye on the academic world, through university collaborations, participating in conferences, and publishing our own work. Finally, it's rewarding to improve products which people use every day; the results of our work are tangible, and it's great to work in an area of science which everyone can relate to.

**Top tips:**

- Be open minded with your options after university. Your first step won't define you for the rest of your life. A wide range of experiences develops flexibility and adaptability – essential skills to succeed in the fast pace of the world today.
- If you want to pursue a PhD, consider Doctoral Training Centres: these provide additional training and experiences on top of your research itself, as well as exposure to a network of academic and industry contacts.

**Position**

Polymer Scientist, Reckitt.

**Background**

MPhys Physics, St Hugh's College, 2017.

## Alumni profile

## Helen Jones

**What:** The phase of drug discovery I work on is turning a hit molecule into a marketable drug through successive cycles of multiparameter optimisation. This involves designing new compounds to address specific issues, then synthesising them in the lab, and finally analysing the data that comes back to see if your hypothesis was correct.

**Why:** I chose to work in the pharmaceutical industry to use the skills I had honed and developed during my MChem and PhD to have a direct impact on people's lives. The possibility that my work may one day lead to a new drug which is used to treat cancer patients and improve their quality of life is a massive driver for me.

**Career path:** As part of the final year of my MChem, I completed a Part II project in an academic Organic Chemistry research group which I thoroughly enjoyed. From this I knew I want to stay in Chemistry but I was not completely sure on which pathway to choose; academia or industry, so I decided to continue learning by completing PhD in Organic Synthesis. I knew that this would give me the experience of academia first hand but also the opportunity to develop my lab-based research skills, which could be applied in either an industrial or academic setting. Upon completing my PhD I came to the conclusion that the academic track was not for me, and instead went on to pursue a career in the pharmaceutical industry where I could apply the skills I had acquired to help improve people's lives.

**Advice:** Since moving to an industrial career path I have had no regrets! It can be a hard decision to turn your back on academia after spending so long in a university setting. Looking back, I wish I had found out more about industry earlier in my career by applying for summer placements or utilising my network and speaking to people working in the field. This may have led me to apply for a more industry focused PhD and make the jump to industry earlier!

**Position**

Senior Research Scientist,  
Medicinal Chemistry,  
AstraZeneca.

**Background**

MChem Chemistry, Pembroke College, 2017.





technology innovation  
transforming life sciences  
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<https://www.rfi.ac.uk/careers-study/>



Voluntary, short-term learning and development opportunities available in the vacation periods.

Micro-internships last between two and five days and take place either remotely or in person.

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk)

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# Start-ups and entrepreneurship

**Becoming an entrepreneur is a popular aspiration for an increasing number of students, as is founding or working for a start-up or spin-out.**

Entrepreneurship offers a chance to build mindsets and skillsets, turn ideas into reality, and to develop solutions to problems you see in the world. Whether the dream is to start something new, or to join an already established company, it's a dynamic path that requires innovation, resourcefulness, and commercial awareness.


## Working for yourself


As a self-employed person, you will have flexibility and independence, make the decisions and drive the business. In addition to creating and delivering your service or product, you will need to consider business development (sales) how you market yourself, your business name, website, brand equity, competitive edge to obtain customers.

But every business has many 'moving parts' alongside product creation, marketing and sales. As a business owner, you will need to also consider how to finance the business; where to find trusted advisers or how to recruit and build your own team; contracting and managing people; and the legal and regulatory requirements relating to establishing the enterprise, protecting any intellectual property (IP), and financial reporting.



# SCIENCE, ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY FAIR 2025

 Saturday 25 October  
10:30 - 13:30

 Examination Schools  
OX1 4BG

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/set](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/set)







Creating a 1-page [Lean Canvas](#) is a good starting point and provides a foundation to develop your thinking further. It provides a route to:

- set out the problem you are trying to solve and your solution;
- identify your customers, your competition and your advantage; and
- consider your costs, your revenues and key metrics.

**Support when making a start**

There are many different types of business, such as a traditional for-profit business, a social enterprise, or a non-profit. It’s also possible to operate as a sole trader, or a [freelancer](#), or to establish either a limited liability partnership (LLP) or private limited company (PLC).

[EnSpire Oxford](#), the University of Oxford’s Entrepreneurship Hub, can help you navigate the wider Oxford entrepreneurship ecosystem. There are resources, courses and opportunities to inspire and equip would-be business creators, and programmes and competitions to learn how to build and pitch your business plan and move an idea to launch and growth in a supportive environment. In addition to the external organisations listed below, look



for training, competitions and opportunities for support led by EnSpire Oxford, the Careers Service, the Saïd Business School (e.g. [E School](#)), and student societies and the university’s [Innovation Startup Incubator](#) and groups in the [Social Shifters programme](#).

The challenges and risks can be daunting, and a high proportion of new ventures fail in the first year (and half fail within five years). This is why many first-time entrepreneurs only take the plunge mid-career, having built knowledge, experience and a network of contacts through their 20s and 30s.

Hone your persuasion skills. This often comes down to being a good storyteller. Whether it’s applying for a job, or motivating people to join your team, many important decisions are made through compelling stories. Being a good listener is equally important – to be able to mirror back people’s desires in ways that align with yours.

*Sultan Murad Saidov, Co-founder, Beamery*

**Next steps**

EnSpire Oxford: [www.eship.ox.ac.uk/home](http://www.eship.ox.ac.uk/home)

**Spin-outs and business support**

Oxford University Innovation: [www.innovation.ox.ac.uk](http://www.innovation.ox.ac.uk)  
Begbroke Science Park: [www.begbroke.ox.ac.uk](http://www.begbroke.ox.ac.uk)  
Oxfordshire Social Entrepreneurs Partnership (OSEP): [www.osep.org.uk](http://www.osep.org.uk)  
OxLEP Business: [www.enterpriseoxfordshire.com](http://www.enterpriseoxfordshire.com)



Alumni profile

# Ana Sousa Geros

**What:** I’ve always aimed to make a positive impact through my career. Initially, I saw an academic career as the ideal path, yet my perspective shifted during my final year of DPhil. I decided to explore other opportunities and immerse myself in different Oxford societies and events. This exploration led to the founding of DŌSOJIN, a startup aimed at making travel safer by leveraging AI and machine learning.

**Why:** Driven by curiosity in innovation and social enterprising, I joined both the Careers Service’s FLIP and EnSpire’s All Innovate programmes. DŌSOJIN was born “accidentally” during All Innovate. Initially, our group was pursuing a biotech idea. However, after a night of worrying about a friend’s safety on a distant date, the thought of AI-powered technology which would ensure users’ safety – and perception of safety – came to my mind. We fell in love with the idea and its social impact, so we created a new business plan and successfully pitched it in the All Innovate closing event. We then secured a place in the OVB programme, gaining invaluable mentorship, training, and networking opportunities through their very thorough workshops.

**Evolution:** We developed our business model in the first six months while juggling research and personal affairs, which was very intensive. We won some small awards – two £500 and two £1000 prizes – and ‘podiumed’ at EnSpire Oxford’s Started in Oxford Demo Night. I’ll complete my DPhil early in 2025 while continuing to build DŌSOJIN. We were fortunate enough to be selected by Sterling Road for their in-house training, which focuses on start-up launch development.

**Advice:** I never thought this path was for me, but nothing is impossible if you’re willing to understand it. It’s all about dreaming and then persevering. Your commitment, resilience, and creativity will make all the difference, every step of the way. Plus, there’s an amazing community ready to encourage and guide you.



**Position**  
Co-founder, DŌSOJIN.

**Background**  
DPhil Clinical Medicine, St Peter’s College, 2025.

Alumni profile

# Ruhul Amin

**What:** I co-founded Onfido in 2012, alongside two fellow Oxford graduates, with the aim of making identity the key to access in a digital world. We saw an opportunity to use machine learning to verify government-issued IDs and match them to facial biometrics, enabling secure and inclusive access to services like banking. Over the next decade, Onfido grew from a small start-up into a global identity verification platform, used by millions and trusted by some of the world’s largest organisations.

**Why:** I’ve always been motivated by solving problems and building things. In my final year at Oxford, I worked on a machine learning project to identify wildlife in images, which sparked my interest in applying AI to real-world challenges. My co-founder Husayn had seen how broken identity systems could be – his parents struggled to open a bank account after moving to the UK. When we began working together, we realised we shared a frustration with how identity excluded people and a belief that technology could help fix it.

**Evolution:** The early days were intense. None of us had much work experience, and suddenly we were running a company, figuring things out as we went. We made plenty of mistakes, and the product went through several pivots as we learned what actually worked. Over time, we raised funding, expanded internationally, and built out both the technology and the company. That journey taught me a huge amount – not just about start-ups, but about resilience, trust, and learning-by-doing, leading to the company’s acquisition in 2024.

**Advice:** You don’t need to have it all figured out. Some of the best paths begin with spotting something broken and wanting to fix it. Entrepreneurship can be a real path, creative, challenging, and a fast way to learn. If you like building and solving problems, it’s one of the most rewarding routes. Follow the problems that interest you, start and it might take you further than you expect.



**Position**  
Co-founder, Onfido.

**Background**  
MEng Engineering Science, 2010.

# Tech: IT, data, AI and machine learning

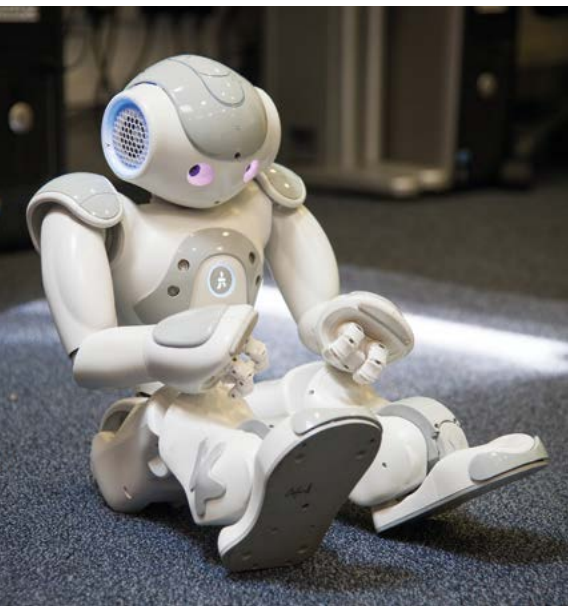
**Computing and IT jobs exist in all sectors and all types of organisations – in fact, over a third of all UK IT professionals work outside the sector.**

Despite some high-profile stories of job cuts in big tech, the demand for people with IT and data skills is still robust. There are many opportunities open not only to those with proven IT skills but also to anyone with the right interests and potential.

Within the IT sector there is a huge range of jobs, roles and job titles – from software engineering, to website production; cloud computing and systems development to cyber security specialists. The rapid expansion of AI, data analyst and data

science roles is adding to demand. The sector also employs people across the full variety of non-technical roles – for example, sales and marketing, legal services, HR, and finance.

Outside the IT industry, technical roles exist across all industries because computing, IT and data underpin critical processes in nearly all organisations. Some sectors recruit particularly heavily into IT roles, notably in advertising and marketing, banking and financial services, games development, consultancy, manufacturing, science and pharma, retail and public sectors. In parallel, the



growth in tech start-ups is creating significant extra demand for technically skilled graduates and, at Oxford, hiring is increasing in rapidly expanding fields such as ‘data analytics’ and ‘FinTech’.

The volume of employment opportunities for IT professionals remains high, and firms can struggle to fill positions. As a result, people with proven programming and analytical skills are highly sought after, and many companies actively recruit people without technical skills who have the potential to learn and develop quickly once in post. Companies provide excellent training and support for new graduates, from an initial intensive ‘bootcamp’ to on-the-job development. Starting salaries, even for those without technical skills, often exceed £30,000.

The IT consultancy industry is also growing fast. Some major players operate globally, offering strategic advice, systems development and implementation. New recruits can expect high quality training before being embedded with clients to work on projects. But tread carefully and understand the contract! Some firms offer ‘free training’ linked to a contracted 2-year period as a consultant, but if you leave earlier they can demand very large repayments (up to £20,000) for the training.

## Getting in and entry points

Companies visit Oxford throughout the autumn to run events and attend our SET Fair, Careers in Computing, and Jobs for Mathematicians Fair. Deadlines tend to fall either side of

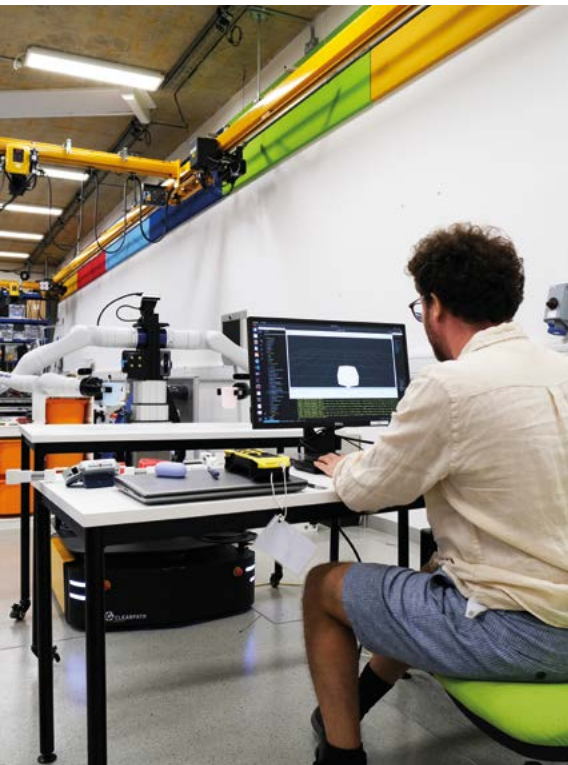


Christmas, running into late January/ February. However, jobs continue to be advertised year-round to fill empty seats.

Whilst computer science graduates are in high demand, many opportunities are open to anyone who demonstrates potential and a keen interest in the field. Having technical experience is very useful, whether acquired through your degree, self-taught or from your extra-curricular experience, so consider how you can provide evidence of your interest and, if you struggle with this, find opportunities to get involved now to gain some experience.

Extra-curricular ideas

- Join societies and attend events: try CompSoc, Oxford Women in Computer Science (OxWoCS) and AI Society.
- Enter competitions or attend a hackathon, including the annual Oxford Hackathon.
- Oxford IT Learning Centre offers a range of [IT-related courses and resources](#).
- Try free, open source self-directed learning at [www.codecademy.com](http://www.codecademy.com) and similar sites. Popular languages include C, C++, HTML, Java, NET, Python and SQL.
- Showcase your programming skills on open-source platforms such as GitHub or take part in competitions run by companies and via [Kaggle.com](#).
- Volunteer for an IT-related project/responsibility with your JCR/society/club or local charity.



Tech offers a greater variety of roles than I ever could’ve imagined. If you don’t have a degree in a STEM field, you might have more skills relevant to a career in tech than you realise.

Jenny Milne, MChem Chemistry, New College, 2022; Synalogik

Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/technology-data-machine-learning-ai](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/technology-data-machine-learning-ai)

Alumni profile

# Dr Hannah Pullen

**What:** I am a senior software engineer working as part of the team that develops the Parallel Computing Toolbox for MATLAB, a programming and numeric computing platform. Our goal is to help MATLAB users speed up their work by running their code in parallel either on their machine, on a cluster, or in the cloud.

My responsibilities are to work on new features, fix bugs, improve the performance of existing features and provide support when customers encounter issues with our toolbox. Working on a new feature includes researching technologies, gathering requirements, designing the feature, presenting the design, writing the code, writing tests, and helping to document the feature

- Why:**
- Lots of opportunities to learn about new technologies and programming languages.
  - I enjoy writing software at a professional level - everything from the software architecture to the lines of code themselves are reviewed by experts, everything is source-controlled and tested properly. There is a team behind every new feature, and nothing is ever purely your responsibility.
  - Good work-life balance; I work 9–5:30pm.

**Advice:** I definitely recommend doing internships – you can’t really know what working in industry is like without trying it out yourself! Making connections with people in the company as an intern helped me get the job I have now.

If you enjoy coding, go above and beyond. Learn about object-oriented coding and architecture patterns; think about how you can apply these to write code that is robust and applicable to multiple use cases. Think about how you can write useful code that you can share with others. Learn how to use source control (e.g. GitHub) to back up and share your code. Proactively seek out projects within your research and complete open-source work which you can refer to on your CV.



**Position**  
Senior Software Engineer, MathWorks.

**Background**  
Postdoc Computational Cancer Research, University of Cambridge, 2020-2022; DPhil Particle Physics, University of Oxford, 2016-2020; MSci Physical Natural Sciences, University of Cambridge, 2012–2016.

## Alumni profile

# Jenny Milne

**What:** At Synalogik, I help to develop fraud detection and investigation software. Working for a start-up helped me to realise my strengths. I discovered new roles I hadn't considered or even knew existed. At first, I worked as a Java developer in our System Reliability team fixing bugs. Now I work directly with our product manager in a cross-functional role, collaborating with our Sales, Compliance, and Engineering divisions to decide and define what we will develop next.

**Advice:**

- Technical interviews for software development roles often centre around "Data Structures and Algorithms". You can find beginner's courses online that will help you prepare for these, and you can practice interview-style questions using resources such as LeetCode.
- Rather than getting too attached to one programming language, focus on getting to grips with the fundamentals of Software Development.
- Putting yourself forward for roles outside your comfort zone can be scary, but I found interviewers were often impressed that I attempted problems using the relatively little programming experience I had at the time. The more interviews I did the better I got. Even if you don't fulfil 100% of the job requirements, apply anyway!
- Companies assess potential - the ability to learn new skills quickly is more important than knowing a programming language inside-out. Technology evolves rapidly, so being able to adapt and learn throughout your career is key.
- A challenging degree can help you build the confidence to 'have a go' - to try and solve problems without fearing a wrong or imperfect solution. When approaching a new skill or experience at work, I often ask myself "How hard can it be?". Yes, sometimes the answer is "very hard indeed", but I remind myself that you can learn hard things. In fact, you've spent an entire degree doing exactly that.

**Position**

Graduate Software Engineer,  
Synalogik.

**Background**

MChem Chemistry, New College,  
2022.

**Get in touch**

We're excited to connect with ambitious and fresh talent ready to make an impact on our team.

[davincitrading.com](http://davincitrading.com)



Da Vinci is a proprietary trading house made up of some of the sharpest minds and most passionate players in the industry.

**DA VINCI**





**Location:** Harpenden

**About us:** We are an engineering team within Cisco that works with global service providers and web hyperscalars, developing cutting edge software that connects the world. The Internet depends on the code we write. It's challenging work that matters, and it's also fun: excelling at writing complex software is what we enjoy. Our team is entirely composed of people who arrived as young, exceptional graduates from top universities. The pathway is there to develop into any of the roles in the team, from the directors and management line to our industry-leading technical experts. It's an ideal environment for bright, creative people with an interest in software.

**Graduates sought:** Computer Science knowledge and coding experience are obviously valuable, but they aren't essential if you can show us that you are enthusiastic about a career in software and have the right aptitude.

**Graduate Salary:** Competitive. Including extensive compensation plan: bonus, pension, 10 days to give to your preferred charity, birthday day off on us, and much more.

**Applications:** The application process is really simple. Just follow the links at [cs.co/ensoft](https://blogs.cisco.com/wearecisco/joining-ciscos-ensoft-team) to upload a CV. Interviews will be held in autumn term via video, only requiring a couple of hours of your time.

<https://blogs.cisco.com/wearecisco/joining-ciscos-ensoft-team>



**The Oxford Guild Careers in Tech Arm**

The multi-award-winning Oxford Guild is the **largest society in Oxford, Europe and the world as of 2015 according to The Times, Forbes, Milkround and BBC.** Our unrivalled track record speaks for itself.

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We worry about your career so you don't have to!

BIGGEST SPEAKERS, EVENTS, BALLS, SOCIALS, TRIPS & CONFERENCES.

We are widely recognised for being the **most established, dynamic, active and professional society on campus** for students looking to apply for internships/jobs and are renowned for our experience. We have demonstrated consistent success in providing effective recruitment and brand awareness opportunities and services for organisations we work with. **We help a huge range of companies from Amazon, Facebook and iwoca to startups, scaleups and more, to increase the quality, diversity and quantity of their applicants.** We also host regular workshops on technical skills, including ML and SQL.

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With **world class speakers such as Sam Altman last year**, the CEO of OpenAI (including major CEOs to Nobel Prize Winners, world leaders, top actors, musicians), and initiatives including our startup accelerator, investment fund, consultancy, app and intranet platform, become part of something special at [www.theoxfordguild.com](http://www.theoxfordguild.com)!

[www.theoxfordguild.com](http://www.theoxfordguild.com)

# CAREERS IN COMPUTING FAIR 2025



Thursday 30 October  
15:00 - 17:30



Mathematical Institute  
OX2 6GG

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/ccf](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/ccf)



Saturday 11 October  
10:30 - 13:30



Examination Schools  
OX1 4BG

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/oucfc](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/oucfc)



# OXFORD UNIVERSITY CAREERS FAIR 2025

## THE FAIR FOR ALL SECTORS





# Other careers

Beyond the industry sectors listed on the previous pages, there are many more opportunities – some of them are quite niche, and some are in rapidly expanding fields at the edge of current knowledge.

Do not feel restricted by the range of graduate jobs that normally get promoted, and think creatively about what would best suit you. Jobs exist now that were not around a decade ago; from YouTube content creator to drone operator. Sometimes it can feel as though everyone at Oxford ends up working in ‘the City’ but graduates go into a whole range of job sectors such as acting; emergency services; religion (particularly from Oxford’s Permanent Private Halls); fine art conservation; managing clubs and music venues; executive search; libraries; translation; and many more.

## Other options

If you are aiming for a route less travelled you may need to think more widely and be more creative in how you source information, find contacts, and build and develop your network. If you are interested in a career that does not get much exposure around Oxford, the Careers Service is very happy to help: careers advisers will be happy to work with you on a one-to-one basis to provide support and ideas to help you move forwards.

Even within the core sectors covered on previous pages there are unusual individual roles. For example, if you are passionately interested in the world of online gaming but do not fancy a technical or coding type role, leading UK companies also employ historical researchers, writers and storytellers, artists, technical support for live motion capture, as well as the full range of business managers such as sales and marketing, HR and finance functions.



## Finding out more

- There are a number of strategies you can follow to find out more about any role or industry. In some ways, the more niche your specific interests are the more focused you can be. If you can find a good starting point – especially a supportive contact or mentor – they might help you to make a lot of progress quickly; for example, by helping you to identify and contact leaders in your chosen field.
- There are some 400 different job profiles covered by [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) for roles as diverse as glass blower/designer, toxicologist, youth worker, patent attorney, hydrologist, animator and company secretary. Each profile offers links to professional bodies, sources for vacancies and suggested courses, and professional development.
- Identify the professional body or society for your field of interest.
  - Their website is likely to include masses of useful information, including industry news, company and event listings, and job vacancies.





- Professional bodies frequently also publish an industry magazine (often with vacancies), and run industry or sector awards which you can use to find leading practitioners.
- Examine vacancies to understand the common requirements such as key skills, qualifications and experience sought, as well as industry norms and terms (jargon).
- Find websites for your niche, for example, working for an MP: [www.w4mp.org](http://www.w4mp.org); Space Internships Network (SpIN) via the Catapult Programme: [www.catapult.org.uk](http://www.catapult.org.uk).
- Use social networks to the full – follow bloggers and experts on X and ask to join specialist groups on Facebook and LinkedIn to see who is part of the conversation and who the opinion leaders are.
- Make yourself visible online: start your own blog or website; showcase your portfolio; make sure your LinkedIn page reflects your goals and relevant experience; comment in discussions, ask for advice and make contacts.
- Specialist recruitment agencies can be another route to finding out information about particular sectors and sourcing vacancies.

### Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/other-sectors](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/other-sectors)

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/library-information-work](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/library-information-work)

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/business-management](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/business-management)

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/translating-interpreting](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/translating-interpreting)

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/networking](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/networking)