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One of the first things to consider when making a career transition is what you want your new role to offer. What were the aspects that you enjoyed from your previous career? What were the things that you didn't enjoy? Consider if there are a particular set of skills that you want to use in your new role going forward. Are there some skills that you wish to further develop? It is important to spend some time reflecting on what you want out of a new direction so that you are better able to identify opportunities that fit your ideal. What did you enjoy from your research career and what skills do you want to take forward?

Review the micro workshop "Capitalise on your research skills to find a career path" as a useful starting point. This workshop gives you an idea of different directions you can take upon leaving research. For example, continuing to do research but in a different area e.g. within Government, Civil Service or for a charity. Researchers may also work in related professional areas or other roles within academia or they may even start their own business. The workshop aims to give some idea of key transferable skills that researchers have such as personal and interpersonal skills, communication and dissemination, business management and teaching and learning. So why are transferable skills important? Highlighting that you have gained the skills that the employer is looking for, through your research background, will convince the employer that you have the necessary experience. Employers can often have concerns that researchers may not have the skills that they require and that the academic environment is too different from a business/commercial environment. This becomes your job to convince the recruiter that your experience is indeed relevant and you need to highlight how you can fit well within the team and solve their problems.

It could be a good idea to try and identify your transferable skills if you haven't yet done so. Complete the skills audit as shown in the micro workshop. Completing a skills audit can be useful when reflecting on suitable roles but also when it comes to making applications for jobs. This can be a good way to identify key pieces of experience to highlight within your application.

For further information on increasing your employability out with academia can be found on the IAD Researcher Blog.

For more detailed help on self-reflection listen to the recording of our first of two workshops on Changing Career Direction. The Handbook that goes with this workshop has several self-reflection exercises to complete, which will give you a much clearer picture of what you are looking for from a future role.

Researching the Market:

Once you have a picture of what you want from your next role you need to think about matching this up to the job market and the opportunities that are out there.

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The second of our [Changing Career Direction](#) workshops is well worth a listen and also has a handbook to refer to. It will help you to identify different ways of searching for roles and researching the sector that you are interested in.

At a glance some useful websites are [Prospects](#) and [SULSA](#). Prospects allows you to search by job title (if you already have a particular role in mind) or by sector if you are looking for a broader overview of what that sector may offer. SULSA, on the other hand, provides a more specific look at the next steps researchers in the life sciences have taken. [Vitae](#) also has a bank of case studies that looks at what 40 researchers have gone on to do so this is a great place to get some inspiration if you have no fixed idea what the next step may be (especially after having completed a skills audit).

Researchers often ask if there is a list of alternatives outside of academia that they can consider. Whilst a definitive list does not exist, there are some common opportunities available that may be useful as a starting point:

Research in a commercial company – Research in this type of environment is likely to be fast paced and client facing. You may embrace the challenges that this entails but equally they may feel very alien. For a list of companies in the UK you can check [Companies House](#).

Management roles / Project Management – these are popular choices for researchers as there are clear overlap between the skills sets. [Science careers](#) has more information.

Consultancy – this might be an option for some interested in commercial applications of research. In order to identify possible firms to contact look at Professional Bodies member lists. If you are keen to test drive consultancy it might be worth seeking further help from [Edinburgh Innovations](#).

Scientific Research Institutes – You can identify lists of institutes by searching on research council's websites. Opportunities in this sector can be similar to those in academia but without the teaching element.

The NHS – The NHS is a big employer of clinical scientists. Searching for medical scientist roles can be a good place to start. They also have a specific [career website](#), which is useful to see the different roles available.

Civil Service – another popular choice with researchers. They have specific recruitment programmes available at different times of the year such as the [Civil Service Fast Stream](#).

Science Policy roles – another popular option with research staff looking for an alternative that doesn't involve "lab" work. Typical employers include charities, trade associations, non-government organisations and public sector organisations.

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Science Communication and Writing – this type of role is all about communication and being able to adapt your style for different audiences. There are specific Masters courses available at certain universities but the best way to work out if this area is for you is to gain experience in the field. The University of Manchester has more information on their website.

Entrepreneurial Start Ups – Maybe there is commercial value in your research or perhaps you like the idea of the independence available to you. Edinburgh Innovations may be a useful starting point to discuss your options.

Market Overview & Contacts:

Try and keep up to date with what is happening in the sector (look at industry publications and websites). Market knowledge is useful for making applications and interviews. Keeping up to date with market information is also a useful way to potentially develop new contacts. For example, commenting on articles and blogs online may spark debate that can be continued on other online platforms. Making contacts using social media platforms is also possible. For example, researching people in roles and organisations of interest and making initial contact through LinkedIn. Attending conferences and professional events is another great way to develop sector awareness as well as making new contacts. For more information on ideas to develop contacts and suggestions of questions to ask see the Handbook for the second Career Direction workshop – Exploring Options.

Once you have completed your online research, and hopefully identified two or three roles that you are interested in finding out more about, this is the point where it becomes important to speak to people! What do we mean by speaking to people? This can be in person, face to face over a coffee or it can be done online via video call or even through messages and email. The key objective is to gain more information about the role and to try and get a detailed insight into the day to day working life of your contact. For more information and suggestions on the type of questions to ask see Informational Interviews.

The University has a database of contacts called Platform One, which is worth signing up to as this can be a way of utilising your existing network to find contacts in your chosen field.

Getting Bespoke Advice:

You can get advice at any point in your career planning journey but it might be helpful to do so before making applications. 1:1 consultations can be booked with Eleanor Hennige, IAD Careers Consultant. Consultations can take the form of general discussions about career direction and strategy or receiving specific feedback on applications that you are making. If you have an upcoming interview, Eleanor can run a mock interview, which will allow you the chance to practice typical interview questions.

For more information on Career Development Consultations see the IAD website.

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A brief article on how to best [prepare for a Career Development Consultation](#) can be found on the IAD researcher blog.

Applying for Jobs beyond Academia:

General points to consider when drafting your CV are the structure, length, use of bullet points to emphasise your relevant experience. Consider if the use of a skills section is appropriate and beneficial. Don't assume that the employer will understand what your academic roles have involved. Sometimes an introductory sentence highlighting what your role involved can be helpful.

For a brief overview of this topic see the micro-workshop "[CVs for Careers Beyond Academia](#)". You need to put yourself in the position of the employer and focus on what evidence they want to see on a CV.

Further Sources of information:

[Adapting your CV for non- academic Jobs](#) (IAD Researcher Blog)

[CV advice from jobs.ac.uk](#) (including CV templates)

[Write a CV for Jobs beyond Academia](#) (main Careers Service)

[CV Checklist](#) (IAD Careers Resources)

[Covering Letter Checklist](#) (IAD Careers Resources)

Guidance on Interviews:

[Preparing for Interviews beyond Academia](#) (main Careers Service)

[Interview Tips](#) (jobs.ac.uk)