

## Welcome to the career and employment service's 'Postgraduate students' career seminar 2010



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**

Career and Employment Service  
<http://careers.massey.ac.nz>

### Exercise one

Brainstorm:

- Why are you studying at the postgraduate level?
- Is it living up to your expectations?
- What are your longer term plans?

### Typical reasons for postgraduate study:

To enter or progress in a career	It is a requirement for the role
To enhance job prospects	To increase earning potential
To demonstrate commitment to a field	For professional development
To develop sectoral knowledge	To specialise
As a point of difference from others	To build a network of contacts
To prove academic ability	For prestige
Knowledge for knowledge's sake	To delay entering the job market
Inability to find work	Lack of clear direction

### The 'new' career

- 'Career' means different things to different people
- It is no longer seen simply as full-time paid employment
- Most people will change jobs a number of times in their working lives
- These changes may include different employers; roles and sectors
- Contract; part-time and 'portfolio' work is more common than ever before
- In New Zealand, many graduates and postgraduates find work in small or medium-sized organisations.

### Maintaining employability

- The focus now is on being **employable** rather than necessarily on being employed.
- Employers expect flexibility and adaptability
- More than ever before, career management and development is the responsibility of the individual rather than the employer.
- You'll be expected to know how to ask for what you want; to identify and grasp opportunities for development; to learn and up skill throughout your working life and to take control of your own career and its development.
- This is a continuous and changing process as you change over time.

### Taking control of your career

- First and foremost, you'll need to know yourself – what you are; what you can offer and what you seek from life.
- You'll need to know the world of work – what roles are out there; how do organisations recruit and select staff; what sectors and roles are growing (or contracting); how are careers structured and what career development is on offer?
- Remember though, that no-one can know everything there is to know about every job. The pace of change means that there are jobs around now that simply didn't exist a decade ago (and vice-versa!)
- Ask yourself – are you studying for interests sake? Equally, is your motivation career-related? Are you seeking to develop in your current role; to aim for promotion or to change to a new role; employer; sector or even country?

### Getting to know you

- Your self – appraisal is likely to begin with taking stock of where you are **now**. It is a good idea to record your current skills; qualities; qualifications; experience; interests and commitments.
- Then, move forward. Where do you want to get to? Why? What options do you (realistically) have?
- Plan and – crucially – take action. Set realistic and manageable goals and explore and access help available to achieve them. Again it is a good idea to record these. Also, to have at least a 'Plan B' to fall back on.
- Act on your plans and reflect on each goal attained. Record the actions you took; the outcome and what you learnt. You'll use this again!

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### Exercise two

Spend five minutes in pairs or threes discussing the following:

- What are the 'top' five skills I could offer an employer?
- What examples might I use to show that I have these skills?

I'll ask some of the groups to report back!

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### What skills do I develop in postgraduate study?

Communication and presentation	Report writing
Lateral and creative thinking	Working in interdisciplinary teams
Research	Financial skills
Commitment and self-motivation	Time management
Analytical thinking	Success orientation
The ability to work independently	Project management

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### What skills do employers want?

In 2006 the Association of Graduate Recruiters (UK) surveyed 236 employers and found that the following skills and attributes were the most sought after, in order of importance to their business. Skills that the recruiter has difficulty in finding are marked \*.

- Commitment and drive
- Teamworking
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Problem solving \*
- Commercial awareness \*
- Time management
- Numeracy
- Computer literacy
- Report writing
- Motivation and enthusiasm
- Oral communication
- Customer focus
- Managing learning and career \*
- Planning and organisation
- Leadership \*
- Cultural sensitivity
- Project management \*
- Risk taking/enterprise\*

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### Non academic CV's:

Non-academic positions - identify the skills developed from your research and prepare a skills-based general CV. This should be targeted for each role and should include:

- Details of **relevant** skills - with **evidence**
- Work experience - responsibilities and achievements
- Education and qualifications
- Extracurricular interests and activities
- Academic and work related referees

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### Evidence is crucial:

Example: Highly developed oral communication skills as demonstrated in –

- Tutoring stage one anthropology for 3 years to culturally diverse groups of students
- 5 years part-time work experience in customer service and market research interviewing roles
- Holding focus groups and conducting qualitative interviews for PhD research
- Presenting research findings both at international conferences and back to community stake holders. Ability to adapt communication style to suit target audiences.

Note that in employer surveys both in the UK, Aus and NZ, interpersonal and communication skills are always ranked as the number one requirement in a candidate.

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