

STEP 4

Building an academic career

What you need to know about finding job vacancies

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ACADEMIC JOB SEARCH CAN INVOLVE **FORMAL RECRUITMENT** (SUCH AS HIGHER EDUCATION WEBSITES, UNIVERSITY HOME PAGES, JOURNAL WEBSITES, INDUSTRY AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION WEBSITES) OR **INFORMAL METHODS** (WHERE POSITIONS ARE OBTAINED THROUGH NETWORKING WITH PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS OR SPECULATIVE APPROACHES TO EMPLOYERS).

HOW CAN NETWORKING HELP WHEN LOOKING FOR A JOB?

Networking has been positively related to the number of job offers received by job-seekers^[1] and is a key way of maximising your chance of success in finding out about job opportunities.

- **Internal networks:** It can be useful to take opportunities throughout your PhD candidature to connect with peers, supervisors, and other researchers within your university and inform them of your interest in moving into an academic role.

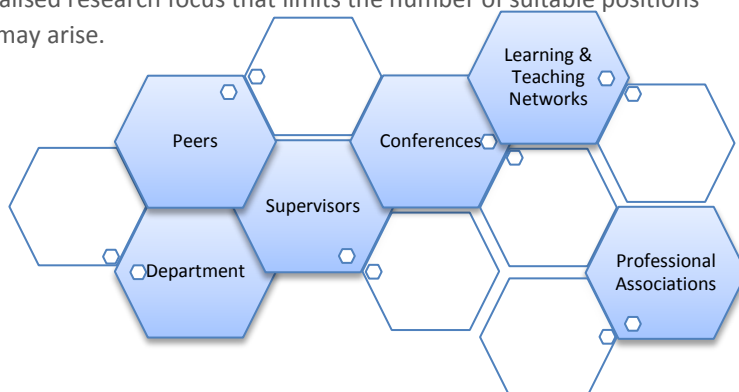
Through these connections, you may find out about positions that are becoming vacant either within your institution and elsewhere, or vacancies which need to be filled at short notice without being advertised.

Involvement in network activities during the PhD program is associated with more favourable labour market outcomes.^[2]

- **External networks:** Expand your network of professional contacts outside your university through involvement in professional associations, conferences, and other events to widen your exposure to possible employment options.

If you are interested in working at a particular university, purposefully build relationships with colleagues there to maximise your chances of being alerted to future job opportunities.

Utilise your supervisor's network and ask for referrals to researchers at other institutions working in your field, particularly if you have a highly specialised research focus that limits the number of suitable positions that may arise.



HOW CAN I EFFECTIVELY USE MY NETWORK?

- Consider the type of position you would like to obtain in terms of your relative interest in teaching and research, the type of institution and your fit within these factors.^[3] Once you have an understanding of the types of academic positions and institutions that you might consider, you will need to prepare an **elevator pitch** to enable you to communicate your strengths and your goals to your network.

An **effective elevator pitch** clearly articulates your current position/research interests/teaching experience, as well as your career interests and goals for the future in a short speech. It can be a useful starting point to ensure that you are introducing yourself professionally, while helping convey important information in a brief conversation.

End your pitch with an open-ended question aimed at identifying any future opportunities of which your colleague may be aware. Practise tailoring this to different audiences, including academics without an in-depth knowledge of your field.

- Always be professional in your communication with individuals in your network, and follow-up any leads or suggestions made to you with an email of thanks. Keep your network informed of your job search progress as they may be aware of information related to a position for which you are applying, or may not know if you are still actively job-seeking.

WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER BEFORE I START APPLYING FOR ADVERTISED POSITIONS?

- You will need to decide what factors are important to you including location, type of university, department, discipline focus, and teaching versus research emphasis. Try to keep your options open, don't discount positions of interest that you do not feel completely qualified for as the selection committee may have considerable discretion as to whom they appoint.
- If you are unsure whether to apply for a position, consider calling the named contact or Head of School and asking to discuss the job and your interest in applying. Keep the conversation brief, and use it as an opportunity to find out what they are looking for and to emphasise your strengths.
- Once you have identified a position, you will need to develop a tailored written application including a cover letter, résumé and other documents such as selection criteria responses.

WHERE CAN I FIND ADVERTISED POSITIONS?

There are numerous on-line recruitment sites advertising Higher Education (HE) positions, including:

- [My university](#) and [Australian Universities](#) - listings of universities across Australia. Check individual university web sites for job vacancies.
- [Unijobs](#) - comprehensive database of positions in HE across Australia, Asia and world-wide. Searchable according to discipline area, location, level of experience and more.
- [The Times Higher Education Jobs](#) – popular listing of HE positions across the UK with multiple search options.
- [Higher Ed Jobs](#) - extensive listing of academic positions across the United States.

WHAT CAN GO WRONG WITH MY JOB SEARCH?

- Failing to network. There is a “hidden” job-market where positions may only be made known to a limited audience or not advertised at all. It is critical that you maximise the likelihood of learning about these vacancies through continuous contact with an extensive network.
- Not applying for jobs because they do not fit your ideal view of a preferred position. Consider whether it could be possible to “job-craft” the role and shape it into one that is a better fit with your interests and career goals. Sometimes accepting a short-term role will give you the experiences you need to fill any gaps in your résumé. Conversely, do not apply for positions for which you are obviously not suited nor have no interest in accepting.

References

1. Van Hoye, G., van Hooft, E.A.J., & Lievens, F. (2009). Networking as a job search behaviour: A social network perspective. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 82, 661–682.
3. Western, M., Boreham, P., Kubler, M., Laffan, W., Western, J., Lawson, A., & Clague, D. (2007). PhD graduates 5 to 7 Years out: Employment outcomes, job attributes and the quality of research training: FINAL REPORT (Revised). Brisbane, Queensland, Australia: The University of Queensland Social Research Centre (UQSRC). <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:177864>
3. Wells, T.W., Schofield, C.A., Clerkin, E.M., & Sheets, E.S. (2013). The academic job market: Advice from the front lines. *The Behavior Therapist*, 36(2), 39-45.

Further Reading & Career Sites

- <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/pursuing-an-academic-career/applying-for-academic-jobs/where-to-find-academic-jobs> [Extensive UK based resources for researchers]
- <http://myuniversity.gov.au/> [Australian Government Site]
- <http://www.australianuniversities.com.au/> [Links to all Australian Higher Education Institutions]
- <https://jobs.timeshighereducation.co.uk/> [UK and International Higher Education job vacancies]
- <https://www.higheredjobs.com/> [US academic jobs]
- <http://www.unijobs.asia/> [Asia's academic and research jobs website]