Define your goals

Whether you know exactly what your career path will be or are still exploring your options, it is important to plan that journey.

Start by thinking in general terms about your specific aim is for using this resource. This might be: finding a job; securing funding; planning your career; or making decisions.

Specific aims

Now expand that into a clear goal statement. Examples could be:
1. To explore all of the career options available to me as a PGR and decide on a path which fits my skills and experience
2. To find out how to secure a research post in my specific research area after graduation and what I can do to prepare for that application in the meantime
3. To find a job which I enjoy and which is well-paid

Goal statement

Think as specifically as you can at this point – there is an opportunity to refine this further later on. If you don't have a clear idea yet about what you want to do when you finish your research degree then that is not unusual – don't panic! The Doctoral College, Career Zone and this resource are here to help you on this journey.

Choose an approach

There are many ways to approach searching for the right job or opportunity after graduation, but some of these are more efficient than others:

1. Just keep searching job sites for something which appeals and applying until you secure a job
2. Rely on contacts for job offers (often in specific industries)
3. Only get CV advice (which will result in evidence of previous experience only) then keep applying to jobs with that CV
4. Explore your skills, attributes and needs in more depth to analyse where, how and with whom you wish to work. Tailor each CV and application to each job role.

Not surprisingly the first two approaches are the simplest and most common. However careers consultants often hear from applicants that they have applied for up to 60 or 70 jobs with no 'luck'. By thinking about your career development earlier in your research journey and understanding your individual skills and needs (and by developing your skill set using opportunities at the University) you will be able to apply for a few key jobs that are a clear match, and be successful sooner.

There is no 'luck' in careers. Admittedly all employers are looking for someone who fits within their company or team culture. But if you ensure that you have clearly communicated evidence of your skills and experience to the employer (and that those skills match those articulated in the job description and/or person specification) then it is highly likely that you will progress in the application process.

Create exploration

Creatively exploring a question or decision is a vital part of the process of change, and also a skill which employer's value. Watch Patti Dobrowolski's Ted Talk explaining a visual and creative way to set new goals and enable change. On the next page, there is a chance for you to try out this activity (or use a bigger piece of paper if you prefer!). Remember that no-one has to see this, so it is your opportunity to explore and generate new ideas.

FIRST: Draw your current role/situation

SECOND: Draw your future role/situation

FINALLY: Decide 3 action you will take to get there:

1.

2.

3.

Setting intentions

Write down your original goal statement adding in anything additional raised through the creative exploration, and then refine your goal with SMART details.

Goal statement

SPECIFIC	Is your goal specific and in what way?	
MEASURABLE	How will you measure its success?	
ACHIEVABLE	Can you achieve this?	
REALISTIC	How realistic is your goal? (Would breaking it down into sub-goals make it more so?)	
TIME BOUND	Set a clear timeframe, or research how long this might take	
EXCITING?!	Does it excite you?! If not, then it may be necessary to revisit your goal and think more creatively about options.	