



## 2.4.4 Career intentions: Planning your career during the degree

What is your answer to these questions?

- What careers are you imagining?
- Where do you get your career knowledge?
- How would you rate your knowledge of labour sectors, the jobs PhD graduates get, etc.?  
(1 excellent – 5 poor)
- When, in your PhD, have you/ did you start thinking about your future career?

Many people in our research did not explicitly explore career opportunities during their PhDs, often because they were focused on finishing the thesis. It was only as they finished that they began to think about this. As well, they did little career searching, depending instead of anecdotal evidence. This was unfortunate because the sooner you start thinking about the career possibilities before graduating the greater the opportunity for you to design your PhD experience to develop the skills and experience you will need. As well, the more you actually do some research on careers, the more informed your choice, whatever that may be.

It may help you to start by thinking about the kinds of jobs that exist both inside and outside the academy. Here is one way of describing the options.

Labour sectors and roles	Permanence?
<u>Academia</u>	
Teaching-only: can do research ‘on the side;’ may involve Master’s supervision	Yes often <i>over time</i>
Research-only: contracts, contingent work; <u>if fellowship</u> , then independence; for both, unlikely to teach but may informally supervise	No
Teaching-research: range of responsibilities related to teaching, research and service/administration	Yes <i>after provisional period</i> (4-6 years)
Academic professional: involves research or teaching support; may involve teaching, e.g., research officer, academic developer, research and public affairs officer	Yes usually
<u>Private, public and para-public</u>	



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Professional: no research expected, but may do 'desk' research or 'evaluation' research, e.g., start-up, NGO evaluation officer,	Yes often
Research professional: main responsibility research, e.g., social science researcher in a hospital, senior research scientist for government research centre	Yes often

## PhD questions to ask yourself: Post-PhD trajectories are built from the beginning of the PhD

1. Why are you doing a PhD? Is it the best way to achieve your intentions?
2. What career are you considering?
  - To what extent do you know the academic and non-academic opportunity structures in your field?
  - How broadly are you looking, e.g., nationally, internationally?
  - What are the gaps in your knowledge?
3. If you are considering an academic position, what do you really know about the demands of a research-teaching position?
  - Are you willing to take on the ramping up of expectations, workload, etc. which could impact your quality of life?
4. If you imagine a career other than as a traditional academic
  - What conferences might you go to?
  - Can you arrange visits to appropriate institutions? Do an internship?
  - Can you arrange a committee member from outside the university?
5. How mobile can you be/ are you prepared to be? Countries and institutions vary in their missions, job conditions, etc. Where would you be willing to move?
6. In relation to the careers you are considering
  - What skills are you developing?
  - What skills will you need to develop?
7. What steps can you take now to prepare yourself for your intended career(s)? See also goal setting.
8. What career resources are available at your university?



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