

Preparing for Academia: How to have a Successful Career

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So, you want an academic career...

- How do you maximize your chance of success?
- Look at: important factors in success.
- Tips: proactively give yourself the best chance.

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PhD achievements

- Mastered your research topic.
- Thesis: significant contribution to knowledge.
- Maybe published a few papers.
- Gained a significant skill set: problem solving, writing, time management, verbal communication, etc.

Is this enough to get your first academic appointment?

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Unfortunately, typically not; having a PhD is usually only one of the criteria ... what can you do to maximise your chance of success?

Understand what employers are seeking.

Academic jobs

- Research
- Teaching
- Administration

Demonstrate competence at all three.

Understanding Employers: Job Requirements

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Tips

- Look at job adverts now!
- What are the essential criteria?
- What are the desired criteria?
- What can you do *now* to ensure you meet them *in the future*?

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Some things to consider:

- **Research topic:** fit to department.
- **Publication record:** number, quality, *your* contribution.
- **Your network:** collaborators.
- **Grants:** funding record, future plans.
- **Esteem indicators:** prizes, awards, invitations,...
- **Community service:** reviewing, PC membership, organisational roles,....

Research topic

- How can you demonstrate fit to department?
- Can you take action to broaden your research?

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Tips

- Apply for positions where your research fits.
- Identify who you could work with when applying for posts.
- Collaborate to get broader expertise.

Publication record

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Tips

- Have a clear sales pitch in the abstract and paper itself.
- Balance number of papers and quality of outlet.
- Aim high when you can take risks.

Collaboration

- Who should you collaborate with?
- What are the advantages of collaborating?
- What are the pitfalls of collaborating?

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Tips: know your responsibilities

- Select collaborators carefully.
- Agree who will contribute what *and* what you will each get out of it.
- Agree roles and responsibilities up front to avoid conflicts and to manage expectations.

Funding

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- What funding options are available to post-docs?
- What funding options are available to new/experienced academics?

Know and exploit the funding landscape.

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Tips

- Find out about options in your country.
- Take advantage of graduate consortium funding.
- Ensure you know funder requirements when applying.
- Try to take part, even informally, in funded projects. **Experience!**
- Read some proposal.
- Get help! Nobody writes (successful) applications in isolation.

So, you have an idea...

How do you turn it into a fundable proposal?

- Is it likely to be funded?
- Do you have the track record to deliver the research?
- Do you have the track record to manage the project?
- Can you convince funder and reviewers of this?

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Tips

- **Track record:** identify potential weaknesses, fill them.
- **Management:** gain experience, smaller projects and build up?
- Get a **mentor**.
- Write a **one-pager**.

Getting a grant is a **major** boost to your CV.

Esteem indicators

- What are examples of esteem indicators?
- How can you proactively get them?

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Tips: Examples of esteem indicators/community service

- Reviewing: volunteer to help.
- Organisation: offer to take on roles appropriate to career stage.
- Network: meet the right people who can give you opportunities.
- Talks: invited seminars etc.
- Prizes, awards.

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- Have you done any teaching?
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Tips: get involved, diversity

- **Type:** seminars, supervisions, labs, lectures.
- **Topics:** range, level.
- **Assessment:** marking, setting, quality assurance.
- **Scale:** small, medium and large groups (different teaching styles).

Tasks include:

- Student recruitment activities.
- Quality assurance.
- Manage department (senior level)
- Lots and lots of meetings!

Administration

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What can you do now?

- Publicity for research events.
- Find out about QA activities, shadow someone.

Take Away Message

- Think about your track record.
- Identify gaps.
- Strategically fill gaps.
- Be excited about your work.
- Inspire others.

Thank You

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