Career Research Strategies for PhDs Worksheet

Why this worksheet? This worksheet describes four strategies for conducting career research. Remember that the time and energy you put into learning more about career paths, types of positions and specific organizations and making professional contacts (networking) will pay off in the long run. The information you gain and relationships you make are a foundational part of your future career and career development process.

> *GREAT News:* Doctoral students and postdocs are naturally curious and know how to do research. You are well trained to do rigorous research, focusing on very specific questions, usually done in a well defined and linear manner. Given your skills you are equipped to research careers, positions, and potential employers.Remember- you are trying to identify your next possible career move--identifying and learning more about plan A and Plan B career options for when you finish your PhD. You are not trying to gather all the information possible to make the perfect decision about your career for the rest of your life (That is not how the career process works!)

> *The Challenge for PhDs:* You may need to flip the way you think and turn off or tone down your well trained researcher brain. This "research" will not be linear and will require different methods. This process will be more like the research you would do to buy a car, rent an apartment, or plan a vacation. You will engage your natural curiosity and seek pragmatic answers to some broad questions from a number of non-scholarly sources- online information, associations, guidebooks, and real humans. Alumni are great sources of information about the processes of career exploration and job search. They can also provide insight into specific careers paths, types of positions, different industries and specific employers. Alumni and other professionals are overwhelmingly open to providing information and advice.

<u>**Instructions:**</u> Read through all four strategies and choose one to begin using now. Each strategy includes a list of broad questions about which you will seek information and advice. You will probably use more than one strategy as the iterative career research process unfolds for you over time.

Sources of information to use to find answers include: general and more specific **Google searches** (list of; articles; websites), **LinkedIn profiles** (job titles, tasks performed, past employers, groups, skills), **Associations** (professional trade publications, reports, news briefs, membership lists, conference attendee lists), **Alumni** (informational interviews; other career advice; organizational/company culture), **VAULT Career Guides** (inside C4T; consulting guides), **Discipline related websites** (reports, career info, networking advice)

Strategy 1: You have a specific career path already in mind. Your research will be focused on learning as much as you can from as many different sources and people. The ultimate goal is to deepen your knowledge so you can determine if this career path is something you want to pursue further by gaining some experience or searching for post-graduation positions.

Questions for research about [fill in career you have in mind] _____:

1. What are the top 3-5 skills associated with satisfaction and success in this career?
2. What are some typical job titles I should consider given my skills and experience?
3. What are the different industries in which I can do this type of work?
4. Typical entry points into this career and any internships/fellowships I should consider to get experience?
5. Current industry or other important trends associated with this career path:
6. What are some potential employers in geographic regions I want to work in?
7. Salary range?
8. Identify 3-5 alumni/professionals I can start/continue the informational interview process.
9. What will be the focus of these informational interviews?
10. ***Reflection along the way:*** How does what I am learning about this career path align/not align with my interests, skills and priorities (what is important to me/values)?

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Strategy 2: I know that I want to work on a specific issue. But I am not really sure what type of positions there are for someone with my interests and skills. I am also unclear about the types of organizations that do this work or specific employers.
I want to do work related to:

[in a few sentences, describe the issue you want to do work related to after your PhD]

The skills/strengths that I really want to use in a position doing this work are (list/name your top 3-5 skills):

Questions for research about careers associated with [insert your issue]_____:

1. What are some of the key organizations/companies doing work related to this issue/ topic?
2. What are some of the types of positions I could pursue after graduation related to this issue that will use my skills?
3. How can I prepare for this type of work/positions? In other words, are there specific types of experiences I should try to get while I am a student/postdoc?
4. What are some associations or groups that I need to become involved in to be around people working on this issue?
5. What are the current and future trends associated with this issue/topic?
6. Identify 3-5 alumni/professionals I can start/continue the informational interview process:
7. What will be the focus of these informational interviews?(write out some questions too)
8. ***Reflection along the way:*** How can I use what I am learning to inform choices about skills I intentionally "upskill", how I get involved in professional associations and how I seek out summer internships or other experiences outside of my RA/GA role?

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Strategy 3: I know that I want to work for a specific employer. But I am not really sure what type of positions there are for someone with my interests and skills. I am also unclear about other organizations that do this type of work

I want to work for [Name the employer]_____:

[in a few sentences, describe why you want to work for this specific employer]

The top skills/strengths that I have to add value to this employer are (list your top 3-5 skills/strengths):

Questions for research about [Insert employer name]_____:

1. What are some of the types of positions I could pursue after graduation at this company/in this organization that will use my skills?
2. Are there some typical entry points into this company?
3. How can I prepare for this type of work/positions? In other words, are there specific types of experiences I should try to get while I am a student/postdoc?
4. What are the values and culture of this organization really like? what do they say vs. what it is really like?
5. What are some associations or groups that I need to become involved in to be around/network people working in this company?
6. How should I follow/stay up to date on what is happening in this organization?
7. Identify 3-5 alumni/professionals I can start/continue the informational interview process to learn more about this company/organization.
8. What will be the focus of these informational interviews?(write out some questions too)
9. What other companies/organizations are doing similar work? or Are their companies that current employees seem to have worked at in the past?
10. *Reflection along the way:* How does working for this company align with my skills and priorities? What are the short and long-term things that I would gain by working for this company/organization? What steps do I need to take to be well networked and prepared for a position at this company/organization? What alternative employers should I be considering to gain experience if I ultimately want to work here?

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Strategy 4: I have no idea of what I want to do with my PhD. But, I am willing to start the process.

Complete the following assessments and then fill in the blanks. After reviewing the information you gather and filling in the boxes, schedule an appointment with a career advisor.
1. Good Experiences Worksheet (In Module 3 of PhD Career Navigator)
2. Transferable Skills Worksheet (In Module 4 of PhD Career Navigator)
3. ImaginePhd (imaginephd.org; YouTube video demo of how to set up an account: https://youtu.be/IBnZ5OK-BIA) and/or myIDP (https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/).
   a. Imagine PhD was developed specifically for humanities and social sciences PhDs but can be used by STEM PhDs as well.
   b. myIDP was developed specifically for PhDs in the Sciences. You will need to create an account and then complete all three assessments (values, interests, and skills).

YOUR SKILLS

STEP 1: Based on my <u>Good Experiences Worksheet</u>, the skills/strengths that I possess are: (list/name your top 3-5 skills):

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

STEP 2: Based on the <u>Transferable Skills Worksheet</u> my top 5 transferable skills are:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

STEP 3: Based on the <u>Skills Assessment in ImaginePhD</u> (Humanities/Social Sciences AND STEM) or <u>myIDP</u> (STEM) list, my top 5 skills are:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

YOUR VALUES AND PRIORITIES

STEP 4: Review your responses to the <u>Values Assessment in ImaginePhD</u> (Humanities/Social Sciences AND STEM) or <u>myIDP</u> (STEM) and your responses on the the <u>Values list at the bottom of the Transferable Skills Worksheet.</u> List the top 5 priorities/values that are important to you in your work at this time (in your next position after your PhD/postdoc) and say a little about why this is important:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

STEP 5: Review the skills and values you have listed. Take a moment to reflect on what you are seeing. Next, do some free writing about your ideal job in a journal. Respond to the following prompts:

- In my ideal position after graduate school, I will be doing…….
- The work that I do as a PhD makes a difference by…..
- The type of organization I would love to work at is …..
- I imagine myself living….. and my life…..

STEP 6: Schedule a career advising appointment to discuss your assessment results, journal response AND next steps for exploring career options. You can meet with Susan Martin, Program Director, PhD Career Development, The Graduate School or a career advisor in your primary career center (Engineering, Business, Public Policy).

To schedule an appointment with Susan Martin, go into your Careers4Terps Account and request a career advising appointment. (A quick demo of how to do this is in this 5 minute YouTube video: https://youtu.be/MqqLNviGUWc. More information about career services provided available to all doctoral students visit: go.umd.edu/phdcareerinfo.
Engineering, Public Policy and Business doctoral students should schedule an appointment with staff in the following career centers:

- Engineering Career Services: https://eng.umd.edu/careers
- Public Policy, Career Connections: https://spp.umd.edu/career-connections
- Office of Career Services, Robert H. Smith School of Business: https://www.rhsmith.umd.edu/office-career-services