Personal Development Planning

Career Development Planning

Career Development Planning (CDP) is an important aspect of Personal Development Planning. CDP is about planning for your future career when you finish your course. It is also about successfully implementing those plans in a graduate market which is always competitive.

The DOTS Model

The DOTS model provides a framework for thinking about what you need to do to maximise your chances of getting what you want when your degree finishes. According to this model, success depends on 4 things:

- Decisions - that will have to be made
- Opportunities - that will need to be researched
- Transition skills - that will need to be practised and perfected
- Self assessment - that needs to be continually undertaken

Self Assessment

Self Assessment is the key to the whole process. How can you choose a career or persuade someone to employ you if you don't know who "you" are? E.g. do you like being with people or prefer handling information on a computer? What are your strengths and weaknesses compared to others? Are you one of the best students in your class or merely average? What skills have you gained from your work experience - customer service, teamwork, and so on? What are you extra-curricular achievements? What do you want from a job - variety and excitement or security and a good work/life balance?

Opportunities

What have people with your degree done in the past? Who are the employers and where do they advertise? When do you need to start your job search? Is there a postgraduate course that would improve your chances of getting in?
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Decisions

When you have thought about yourself and matched that to what’s out there in the ‘real’ world, you will need to make some career decisions. If you are doing a vocational degree some decisions may already have been made. You may know the main type of career you want; surveyor, engineer or nurse for example. However, even then other decisions will have to be made. When are you going to start? Which employers will you choose? Large employers with graduate training schemes are very attractive but they are also highly selective and get many applications. Smaller employers may want less and still have plenty of jobs attractive to graduates.

Transition Skills

Once you have decided what you want that isn’t the end of it. You still need to persuade an employer or university to offer you a place. Most initial screening is done by CV or application form and that is where most applicants get rejected. Following a telephone interview and/or a face-to-face interview some employers will also use psychometric tests and assessment centres in their recruitment.

Career Development Action Plan for Graduates

It is a mistake to think that career planning can be left until the final year of your course or worst until after you have graduated. Career planning should start at the very beginning of your time at university.

Year One

What do you want out of your time at university? Year one is the time to think about getting involved in a university club or developing a sport. The University can help you find volunteer work in the community. Mentoring, becoming a student ambassador or course representative are also valuable additions to your CV that will really help you stand out from the crowd when you graduate.
Throughout the course you may want (or need) to do part-time work. It is important during term time that you don’t work more than 20 hours a week - more will affect your studies.

**Year Two**

This is the year that you may want to think about trying to get relevant work experience. If your course offers the chance to do a year out placement we would advise you to take advantage of this opportunity. Graduate employers will favour those students who have done a sandwich year. If your course doesn’t include that option you may want to look at getting a summer internship between your second and third year.

The summer term is also a good time to think about your longer term goals. What have people with your degree done in the past?

**Year Three**

The focus will now switch to what will happen when you graduate. Large companies will start their recruitment early in the autumn of your final year. Autumn or early spring is also the time to think about whether you are going to apply to any postgraduate courses.

**After Graduation**

Don’t worry if it takes a while to sort yourself out. Bear in mind that you can use all of the facilities at JobShop & Careers for up to two years after you graduate.
Help With Looking for Part-Time Work

Start at JobShop & Careers, Caxton House. It has been set up specifically to help LSBU students find out about part-time and work experience opportunities.

Jobcentre Plus is the next port of call. You can find your local Jobcentre plus through the yellow pages phone book, Thomson’s Gazette or through the web at [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk).

Many part-time jobs are never advertised. Ask politely but firmly in local shops and stores. Have a copy of your CV ready to leave with the shop manager or whoever is in charge. Keep an eye out for traders advertising vacancies in shop windows or similar outlets. Local papers advertise vacancies; get these magazines or newspapers on the day they are published (they will be freely available in your local library) and contact the employer without delay. Free publications such as the Metro are also useful. If you have specific skills and experience to offer, recruitment agencies in the local area may be interested in you.

Help in Looking for Placements/Internships

If your course gives you the chance to do a sandwich placement in your third year our advice would be “go for it”. In a competitive graduate market place the sandwich year gives you an enormous advantage. These placements are normally paid. You may get a job offer from the employer you spent your year with. While finding a placement is ultimately up to you, you can get support from the JobShop & Careers Placement Team.

If your course doesn’t have a placement year an alternative might be to do a summer internship between the second and final year of your degree. Again you can get help doing this from the Placement Team.
Help When You Graduate

If you are unclear about your next possible step or wish to review possible options, then speak to one of our Careers Advisers. Careers interviews can be booked at any stage of your course and are complete confidential. You can discuss any aspect of your career planning with an adviser who specialises in your area of study. If you have been shortlisted for an interview you can arrange to have a mock interview to get some practise before the real thing.