Taking time out after your degree

At the end of your course you may think about spending some time doing something new or different before going on to further study or starting a career. Alternatively, you may need time to build up some experience to help you get onto the career path you have chosen. Or you may find that you have unexpected time between finishing your course and finding a graduate position.

Think about why you want to do this. What is your motivation?
For example, it might be that you would like to:

- Have a break from study/work
- Have time to reflect on what you have already achieved and how to move on
- Give some time to others or the environment
- Be challenged/gain confidence
- Be independent
- Fill the time between graduation and starting a graduate position
- Gain work experience necessary for a future career
- Develop specific skills e.g. a language, IT skills
- Pursue an interest

Reflect on what you anticipate you might achieve
- Time and space to consider your future
- Better able to make decisions
- Expanding networks
- Greater confidence
- Greater cultural awareness
- New skills, both general and specific
- Better able to apply for a particular career
- More work experience
- New friends

Consider how you could use the time
- Work - home/abroad
- Voluntary work - home/abroad
- Study - home/abroad
- Work experience/shadowing
- Graduate internships
- Travel
Some ideas
You could stay in the UK to work temporarily, volunteer or do some courses to boost your skills and knowledge for the career area you are targeting. You could organise some work experience /informational interviewing or work shadowing to help you learn more about a specific sector. See our Successful Networking information sheet for help with this.

If you go overseas there are hundreds of options. If you are travelling you might choose to do seasonal work - for example working in ski resorts, fruit picking, cruise ships, crew sailing yachts, au pair work etc. Children’s summer camps/activity centres overseas recruit hundreds of students/graduates each year. There are also many opportunities to volunteer for charities, environmental and development organisations. Teaching English (TEFL) is another very popular option for graduates. Read more about TEFL here.

Think through the practical implications
These might include:

- Organising your time – How long? When?
- Financing your plans
- Finding appropriate opportunities
- Recruitment cycle/applications
- Language issues (for overseas)
- Visas/work permits.

Timing is particularly important if you hope to go onto a course or into graduate level employment immediately after your time out. Think about the timing of recruitment for graduate schemes, in particular those which tend to recruit in advance. If you are not going to be in the country, how will you be able to research opportunities and make applications? The key is to plan ahead as much as possible. Many applications are online and some employers conduct an initial telephone interview of applicants, which can be an accessible screening process wherever you are. Sometimes you may be able to negotiate deferred entry to a course or grad scheme. Some employers have starting points throughout the year and many smaller employers recruit as and when they need staff. Different career areas have different recruitment patterns, so giving time to researching possibilities before you leave university will be invaluable to you in the long term. Read our Graduate Vacancies information sheet which will help you to understand the recruitment cycle.

Find out how employers view “time out”
If you are clear about your motivation and are able to reflect on what you have learned or how you have developed during the time, employers are likely to view you very favourably. Employers recognise that an individual may have developed his/her skills, confidence or general maturity; it is up to you to demonstrate and articulate to employers what you have achieved and what effect this has had upon you.

Take some time to stand back, look at yourself and consider your objectives
Is this the right move for you? Think about the issues now, use the information we provide and talk through your plans with one of our Careers Consultants. Planning your time in advance will help you to enjoy your time and make it work for you.

If you take time out by taking part in an organised programme overseas (work experience/volunteering/ gap year) you should check out the opportunity carefully. You can find useful information and suggestions for questions to ask at: yearoutgroup.org.
You should also keep up to date with any travel advice given by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice
Some organisations offering opportunities overseas attend events on campus each year. See who’s attending our fairs and events on our What's On page and Careers Gateway.
Websites to get you started:

Temporary work – UK
Unexplainable employment gaps are not the best first impression from an employer’s perspective. Getting some temporary work whilst you look for something else is the perfect way to gain some valuable work experience, flesh out your CV and save some money. Who knows, you may enjoy it make it a permanent position:

• Search for opportunities on Careers Gateway www.york.ac.uk/careers/gateway
• Download our information sheet on Finding Temporary and Part time work in the UK

Work Experience – UK

• Take a look at our resources on work experience for ideas and tips on how to gain valuable work experience or work shadowing: york.ac.uk/careers/info-sheets

Working Experience - abroad

• Check out our page on international work for more job search links and information on working abroad
• Read our info sheet on Working Outside the UK
• We also advertise thousands of opportunities for work in the UK and overseas via Careers Gateway. Just click on the opportunities tab and filter the results you want to see

Voluntary work
Volunteering is a great way to gain new skills, demonstrate team work, leadership, time management and compassion. Find a variety of volunteering opportunities through the following links:

• www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk- charity organising UK placements
• www.do-it.org.uk- database of opportunities in the UK and overseas
• www.volunteering.org.uk- volunteering opportunities in the UK
• www.york.ac.uk/careers/volunteering- local York based opportunities

Study – UK
If you feel as though there is an academic area or skill you want to build on to help your future then take on some short courses. These are cheap (sometimes free) – ways to broaden your skillset:

• MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses): many leading universities around the world offer FREE short courses in thousands of subjects – learn to code, speak a new language, build your presentation skills – whatever you want to do there will be a MOOC available! Search now at www.edx.org
• www.hotcourses.com- online course search throughout the UK
• nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk search for courses throughout the UK
• Local colleges sometimes enrol for evening courses. Search on the individual college’s website or through your local council to see what’s on offer
• Noticeboards in public spaces, such as libraries or universities, often advertise courses or workshops for you to get involved in. Check out what the University of York offers in their open lecture series: www.york.ac.uk/events/public-lectures

Graduate Internships
If you need to get work experience once you graduate to boost your CV or to gain some specific experience in a sector you want to work in, you could try to get a graduate internship. Try some of these sites to find a vacancy:

• The Graduate Talent Pool graduatetalentpool.direct.gov.uk
• Inspiring Interns www.inspiringinterns.com
We sometimes have Graduate Internships advertised on Careers Gateway, under the ‘Opportunities’ tab.

Travel
Individual or group travel is a demonstration of independence, planning and resilience. You will see so many beautiful things, meet many interesting people and have fascinating stories to tell. To ensure you have a trip of a lifetime, make sure you have all the necessary documentation, vaccines, medication and insurance.

- Travel agencies like statravel.co.uk can help plan your trip and advise on places to stay, activities, vaccines and flights, but be aware there will be a fee attached.
- Travel guides such as Rough Guides or Lonely Planet are regularly updated by their writers to ensure accuracy, so be sure to purchase the latest version. (These can be downloaded as e-books, perfect for keeping your backpack light)
- Go to gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice to search by country for specific advice for UK travellers.

Also, speak to people you know who have been to the countries you’re interested in. They will be able to point you in the right direction to start your adventure.

Please note: The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. Careers and Placements cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites.