



# Researching Careers and Employers

## Research skills – are you using them?

Just like any other unfamiliar area in life – conducting research about your career prospects can assist you in better planning.

Researching skills are already part of what defines you as a university student. So how adept are you at applying your research skills beyond your degree?

This is an important question as **a lack of research often underlies the problems we encounter in moving forward with our career.** For example:

- Difficulty making decisions because you lack crucial information that will help you make the best decision
- Finding out too late about key deadlines or things you should have done
- Making ill-informed choices which you later regret or unknowingly narrowing your options
- Failing to convince employers of your job/career awareness and motivation in an application or interview
- Lack of confidence about what you can do and the world of work in general

Be reassured! If you don't know where to start, are overwhelmed by Google search results, or have been relying only on anecdotal information or doom and gloom headlines – there are lots of good resources out there. **Remember that information is power.**

## What am I looking for?

The acronym **SPEEDCOP** will help you to discover information about careers and make sure you're not forming only a partial picture of what's involved.

- **Surroundings** – where will you be based? e.g. city or country, office-based or out and about?
- **Prospects** – is there future career progression or stability. Could you specialise or diversify?
- **Entry & training** - what qualifications might be needed? Would experience be required? Would training be offered?

- **Effects** – would you mind if the job impacted on your personal life, e.g. 9 to 5 or holiday work?
- **Description of work (duties)** - what would you be doing on a daily basis?
- **Conditions** – what benefits might be offered by an employer e.g superannuation, annual leave
- **Organisation** – is it large, small, ethical, profit driven, charity, public sector?
- **People** – Who would you be working with? What type of work culture would they share – formal, informal, hierarchical, easy going, competitive, busy, creative?

## Online Occupation and Sector Resources

[www.myfuture.edu.au](http://www.myfuture.edu.au) – Paid subscription based, government-run website with course information, career and university profiles, industry and job information, company and case study information (*New South Wales is not a funded state so there will be limited information unless you pay for a subscription*)

[www.mybigtomorrow.com.au](http://www.mybigtomorrow.com.au) – Written for high schoolers but relevant to university students. Information on jobs of the future including videos, characteristics, educational pathways, and exercises to start working on your skills now

[www.joboutlook.gov.au](http://www.joboutlook.gov.au) – Government database on industry and career insights including salary, percentage of employed vs unemployed, job titles, industry size, and educational pathways

<https://jobjumpstart.employment.gov.au> – Finding jobs, careers and career insight, your workplace rights, and other information based upon where you are as a high school student, graduate, or current employee

<https://jobsearch.gov.au/selfstart> - Resources, tips, and guidelines starting your own business

<https://www.careerfaqs.com.au> – Publisher and source of varied careers and industry information and course options

## UK Based Websites

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) – detailed information about a wide range of graduate occupations and sectors

<http://targetjobs.co.uk> – occupational information and practical sector salary and application advice

[www.totalprofessions.com](http://www.totalprofessions.com) – Links to websites of over 300 different professional bodies as well as a range of useful sector summaries (info is from a UK perspective)

## Vacancies

Some of the best information about jobs – what they involve, how many there are, what employers look for, pay and prospects – comes from real vacancies. Even if you're not in a position to apply for them at the moment, it helps to take a peak at what will be expected of you. See our [Job Websites list](#) for ideas on where you can look.

## Wider sector and News

*Reading the news* and staying educated about current affairs, whether it's through television, printed media, newsletters from a professional association, or a white paper, can give you useful information about the changing demands and realities of different sectors. You can also learn about industry trends and developments.

*Professional Press* – Macquarie University library and local libraries subscribe to a large number of sector-specific periodicals, or they can find links to relevant sector journals on-line.

Also, in your library subject guides, there may be an industry and careers tab (all degrees have this for the Faculty of Science and Engineering) that will take you to a range of career resources. If you scroll down from there, you'll find a number of research databases.

## The horse's mouth – people in the know

Some of the best information comes from talking to people directly. There's the added bonus that contacting people to gain information has been shown to increase opportunities for getting a foot in the door. Meeting to talk with someone may lead to an offer of job shadowing or perhaps short-term project work, and then maybe to paid work experience. Make sure you have found out as much as you can from online and other sources first.

## Networking

We all have more contacts than we think (family, friends, family of friends, friends of colleagues, etc). The difficulty is often asking for help, or acting on existing offers. In reality, most people are flattered that you're interested in the work they do and are happy to help.

Make a network map of everyone you know and you may be surprised at how many sectors and roles they encompass.

## Speculative approaches

You could also try to arrange an 'Information Interview' or workplace visit by contacting someone you don't know speculatively. They could also be a contact from a friend or colleague. This is a chance for you to ask questions, learn about career paths, or ask for specific advice. **You do not ask for a job here as the subject might not take the request well coming from a stranger, and if they are not hiring at the time, a "no" answer could close off further conversation with them.**

Research your target beforehand to find out as much as you can about what they do and the employer they work for. Ring or e-mail and explain who you are and what you're asking for. Be polite and make it easier for them to say to yes by asking for 15 minutes of their time, at a time to suit them. For support in approaching this the right way, speak to us or ask us for our resource on Cold Calling.

## LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a huge social media website for professional networking (currently 225 million users worldwide). It is estimated that 1 in 4 Australian professionals are on LinkedIn.

You can use it to build your own online network and to conduct research into occupations, companies and the careers paths of individuals and alumni from Macquarie.

(<http://www.linkedin.com/college/alumni>).

You can also use LinkedIn to follow people of influence (speakers, CEOs, entrepreneurs, and thought leaders). You can also follow your favourite company to discover employment opportunities, news and developments, and insights into their culture. You can even join groups on LinkedIn related to your industry, interest, or degree to see relevant articles, get industry updates, and other useful insights.

A short introductory video explaining how you can use LinkedIn effectively can be found online at: <https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students>.

This video is just one of a wide range of presentations, videos and handouts within the *LinkedIn Career Services Resource Center* which was created for instructors and career practitioners: <https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students>.

*\*\*This resource was inspired by and adapted from a handout completed by Lorna Froud, a higher education consultant from the University of Reading, UK.*

**FIND OUT MORE**

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