**Preparing for work**

## How to find job opportunities

If you’re worried about finding a job or feel you just don’t know where to start here are some useful tips to help you along.

* Look for formal job advertisements in the following places:
  + [SoR website](https://www.sor.org/career-progression/jobs)
  + [Synergy News](https://archive.sor.org/learning/library-publications/synergy-news)
  + [NHS Jobs database](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/)
  + Vacancies section on the individual hospital websites.
* However, don’t just rely on formal methods such as adverts in Synergy News to find a job. Whilst a lot of jobs are advertised, many are not, especially more junior roles. Make enquiries through senior staff in departments showing interest in any vacancies that are available now or will be in future;
* Departments know when students will be graduating and they will expect contact from those who are keen to work in their departments, so it’s advisable to apply speculatively by sending a letter and CV to the relevant department or call the department and find out who you should address your letter to. You can contact as many departments as you want this way;
* What about spending your elective placement time, which is usually in the final year of your course, in a department you are thinking of applying to for a job? This is a great way of getting to know the department and its staff to make sure you really want to work there. It also provides you with lots of experience within the department which will be really beneficial to you during an interview there. The staff can also see how well you fit in working with them and this can be really valuable in making you stand out from the crowd if you apply for a job there;
* A number of independent hospitals are increasingly being provided by the private sector. Look out for positions. Their pay terms and conditions vary, so check these carefully;
* Don’t limit yourself to finding a job within one department - It’s important in this economic climate to investigate others.

When thinking about starting your search for a job here are some additional points to consider:

* What type of hospital would you like to work in? Eg, specialised or general;
* What region do you want to live in?
* Do you want to live in a rural area or large city?
* Do you want to work in a district or teaching hospital?
* What specialised techniques are carried out in the departments?
* Do they offer a preceptorship or induction programme?
* Is there an opportunity for role extension?
* What CPD activities are available? Is funding accessible or will you have to pay for these yourself?
* What opportunities for promotion are you likely to have?
* Is there an opportunity to be involved in research?

## Arranging informal visit/chat

If you are interested in working in a particular region/hospital/department but have had no previous experience there, it is always good practice to write to the service manager to enquire as to whether they are likely to have vacancies when you expect to graduate, or in the not too distant future after your graduation.

Enclose a copy of your CV for them to read so they are aware of your skills and abilities. Do your research! Make sure the letter is specific to the department you are writing to. It is very easy to see when a student has written to departments en masse. This can be quite off putting to potential employers.

See if you can do some work experience within the department or at least arrange a day visit or organise to chat to someone. This will give you a really good insight into the department and if suits you and it will give you the chance to see if you would like to live in that location.

Potential employers will see this as a good opportunity to see how well you fit into their department and they will remember you, so make sure you use the opportunity as a positive way to demonstrate you’d be great for any jobs that come available.

Follow up any work experience or visit with a letter of thanks. This can also be an chance to express your interest in any jobs that are available now or will become so in the future.

## Producing a Curriculum Vitae

A curriculum vitae (CV) provides important information which employers will use to assess your skills and suitability for a job. Most of the time, you will be required to fill in an online application for work, and your CV can be used as the basis for entering the appropriate information in the online application form. Some employers, in addition to completing the online application, request a copy of the CV as an attachment.

There are many templates for CVs which you can download from the internet but no set style. Most cover the basic information requirements, but to stand out, a CV needs to distinguish you as an applicant. One of the best ways of doing this is to show what you've accomplished. Everyone has a list of what they've done, things they've achieved.

There are many schools of thought as to how a CV should be organised. Much depends on the individual and the job you are seeking, but some of these general points may be useful:

* Make sure that it is well-presented and contains enough information to arouse potential employer’s interest;
* Consider the position you are applying for and make sure that your CV reflects your suitability to perform the tasks. Often, when completing online application forms, the result is parsed by a programme which looks for similar terms found in both your CV and the job description.
* Type your CV, spacing sections well so it doesn’t look cluttered;
* Check for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors;
* Keep to no more than 2 sides of A4;
* Include personal details: Full name, address, phone number, date of birth and age; Education and training: List in reverse date order (the most recent first) the schools and colleges you have attended since age 11; Academic qualifications: List the examinations passed with grades attained; Clinical education: List the clinical departments in which you have been placed giving details of the type of experience you gained in each;
* Under the title 'Positions held', include any positions of responsibility you’ve held, eg, Student Representative, Student Observer to Council, Student Reporter, etc;
* Include any work experience, such as holiday, part-time or voluntary work undertaken, briefly mentioning your duties and what the job involved. Mature students should detail any previous full-time employment;
* Consider what impression it is you want to create before completing the ‘interests and achievements’ section. List any special skills or hobbies or awards you’ve achieved;
* Include any additional courses/conferences/study events you have attended;
* For your references, provide names and addresses of people who are willing to be contacted by the prospective employer with a view to commenting on your experience and personal qualities. In the case of references for your first position, you ideally should ask your course leader and someone involved in supervising your clinical education or another lecturer. Mature students may ask a previous employer. It is important to ask permission before using their names;
* If sending your CV via email, attach the cover letter rather than type it into the email message. The format of email can change drastically depending on the software that is used by the employer, therefore, it may not look the same when it arrives or be easy to read, so be aware;
* It is sometimes not possible to add a CV with an online application, but having a current CV will ensure that all your information is available to be used in the application.

## How to write a cover letter

Cover letters are often included as part of the job application process. The cover letter highlights to the employer what you have done, why you believe you are suitable for the job, why you are interested in the post, or the organisation.

You should try to include the following in your covering letter:

* An introduction which states why you are writing. Is it in response to a vacancy or are you making a speculative enquiry? What do you want to achieve by sending the letter?
* Highlight your unique selling points. Refer to the information in your CV and state clearly how you match what the employer is asking for if responding to an advert. If you are making a speculative application, think about what you would expect them to be looking for;
* Clearly state why you have chosen this particular place to write to. What appeals to you about this employer and job? Show you have researched the role and the organisation. Always tailor your covering letter to a specific role.

Some Do’s and Don’ts to assist you:

### Do

* Use one page of A4 paper and four or five paragraphs;
* Use a professional tone;
* Address it to a person by name. If you are not sure of the person who you need to address your letter to, call the department and speak to the receptionist who should be able to assist you;
* Set out your letter as a formal business letter. If you are not sure how to do this, please click on the following link <http://library.bcu.ac.uk/learner/writingguides/1.06.htm>
* Make sure your grammar and spelling are perfect. Employers will not consider someone who couldn’t even be bothered to proof read their own application documents;
* Use the same font as your CV so that they are consistent;
* Include your contact details.

### Don't

* Waffle. Make the employer want to read your CV;
* Be overly humorous or too informal - you want to be taken seriously;
* Underplay your skills or make negative comments about yourself.

## Completing application forms

Completing application forms can be time consuming but it’s worth spending the time getting it right. Allow enough time to make a good job of each form. Almost all applications are now submitted online. Refer to your CV for details and be consistent.

Here are some helpful guidelines to assist you:

* Check you have all the information you will need to complete the form, eg, examination dates/gap year details;
* Completing an online application successfully depends on the work you put in BEFORE you get to a computer, this is usually the time spent preparing your CV;
* Applying online may seem informal but this is your first opportunity to present yourself as a professional;
* Spelling and grammar matter – hugely. Don’t send anything without checking through at least twice;
* Cutting and pasting from one application to another carries hazards – the main error is leaving in the name of another employer;
* Keep a copy of your application form for reference. This will be especially important if you are invited to be interviewed as you can review what you wrote;
* Check all the instructions before starting - some employers, for example, insist that supporting documentation be provided in a specific format (eg, word, or pdf);
* Fill in all sections of form (including any regarding professional registration with details that you’re a student);
* Leave no gaps;
* The ‘person specification’ provides you with a list of skills employers are looking for:
  + ‘Essential’ skills are skills the employer wants candidates to have;
  + ‘Desirable’ skills are advantageous but not essential;
  + How employers judge if you have these skills are added into the person specification, eg, via your CV, application form, professional portfolio, interview. Using the terminology in your application which has been used by the employer in the job or person description will improve your chances of getting through the first part of the selection process ;
  + Those applicants who match the person specification best are likely to be called for interview.

## Write the perfect personal statement

When completing an application form, students will probably have similar experience/training until the ‘supporting statement’, so the statement is an important section for you to stand out from the competition.

Here are some top tips for writing your own personal statement:

## Know what employers are looking for

When completing application forms and attending interviews you need to be aware employers are looking for certain skills and attributes. These may also be referred to as competencies. These are a few skills and attributes that are commonly looked for:

* Good communication skills;
* Excellent patient care skills;
* Ability to think critically; act logically to evaluate situations; solve problems; make decisions;
* Ability to work within teams;
* High self-esteem and confidence;
* Honesty, integrity and good personal ethics;
* A positive attitude toward learning and development;
* Initiative;
* Ability to set goals and priorities;
* Adaptability and flexibility;
* Takes accountability for actions taken;
* Positive attitude toward change;
* Understand and be able to contribute to the organisation’s goals;
* Plan and make decisions with others and support the outcomes;
* Respect the thoughts and opinions of others .

## Preparing for interviews

If you are called for an interview, this means the employers are interested in your application form and believe that you have the potential to be a successful candidate. The interview will allow them to see whether you are able to meet (or raise) their expectations compared to the statements you made in your application.

Attending interviews can be a daunting prospect for some students, especially if they have never had an interview before. However, you must remember the employer believes you are capable of doing the job, otherwise you wouldn’t have been invited to an interview.

Here is some advice on how to prepare for your interview:

* Do some research to find out all you can about the hospital and department;
* Research what equipment they have, how the department is structured and opportunities for career progression. Be aware of any expansion of department, new procedures or equipment;
* Know exactly how to get to interview (don’t be late) - check the route and allow plenty of time for your journey since hospitals are often large and departments can be in different buildings. It takes time to find your way around a hospital when you don’t know where you’re going. Do a ‘dummy’ run, if you can, to ensure you know exactly where to be. There is nothing worse than rushing late to an appointment;
* Make sure you have the name of the person you'll be meeting, the address you’re going to, the phone number, directions in case you’re late – If you are delayed let them know as soon as possible;
* Decide what to wear before the interview date so that you can make sure it's appropriate, clean and pressed;
* If you have any special needs for the interview, eg, hard of hearing, use a wheelchair, let the interviewers know so they can make suitable arrangements ;
* Read through your copy of your application form and CV – the employer will use these to ask you questions so you need to remember what you wrote;
* Read the job description so you refresh your memory of the skills and experience the employer is looking for;
* Be able to present past experiences to show how you have already been able to achieve some of the requirements mentioned in the job description, either as an individual or as part of a team;
* Look through the person specification and prepare yourself to answer questions on how you match what they are requesting;
* Think about the questions you would like to ask at the end of the interview, as its usual practice to ask candidates if they have any and it’s good practice to ask at least one. If the questions are answered during the course of the interview, explain that the questions you had have been covered;
* It is now common to see personal portfolios brought to the interviews so think about taking yours with you. CPD Now can help you put together a relevant summary of your achievements to demonstrate your suitability for the post;
* If applying to the NHS, update yourself with key government policies for the NHS and how this will affect the health service;
* Think about questions that are usually guaranteed to be asked at every interview eg, 'Why do you want this position?', 'What can you bring to the job?', 'What are your strengths and weaknesses?', 'Do you have any particular development needs?'
* If you can, hold a mock interview with someone else acting as the interviewer and try to replicate the interview experience;
* Don’t drink alcohol before the interview.

## Excel during interviews

The following advice should help you to excel during an interview:

* Dress appropriately - this is not a casual occasion, you are presenting yourself as a credible professional and first impressions count;
* Be confident - this is the most important element you can bring to an interview;
* Be yourself, be positive and be interesting;
* Be friendly and professional with everyone... and smile!;
* Demonstrate a professional persona;
* Greet the interviewer and introduce yourself;
* Shake an offered hand with confidence;
* Make good eye contact with the interviewers, especially the person asking the question;
* Be attentive, enthusiastic and maintain eye contact;
* Be calm and poised. Be aware of your nervous habits, and try to keep them under control. Try not to fiddle with pens, your hands, your hair, etc, or move around in your chair too much. Eye contact and body language are important;
* Speak clearly, and try not to rush your words. Be aware of verbal/non-verbal prompts from the interviewers, which may indicate that you need to either give more information, or have already given enough;
* Promote yourself without bragging. Don't exaggerate or compare yourself to others;
* Think before you answer;
* Answer questions as fully as you can without being too longwinded – don’t ramble!
* Don’t make false statements that you cannot justify;
* Stay calm and unruffled and do not get on the defensive, you may well be challenged deliberately to see how you may react;
* If you are asked a question you don't understand, ask for clarification;
* If you can’t answer a question, ask if you can come back to it later in order to give yourself some time to think of an appropriate answer;
* Don't give 'yes' or 'no' answers. Give examples in your answers wherever you can;
* If you are asked about your weaknesses, try to turn this into a strength;
* Watch your speech. Avoid 'er' and 'ah' and 'like';
* Don't criticise your university or clinical placement site. Radiography is a small world;
* Make it a pleasure for the interviewer as they might be almost as nervous as you;
* Use every opportunity to show you are interested in this particular job/department/hospital;
* The interviewers will normally tell you when you are likely to be given the result. If they don’t, it’s acceptable to ask;
* Remember to thank the interviewers before you leave.

## Potential questions

There are many questions interviewers may ask you. However it is always beneficial to prepare for those that come up often. Below is a short list:

These are potential questions you may be asked in an interview:

* What are your five-year career goals?
* What your personal skills and abilities? Give specific examples of how you have used these skills?
* What accomplishments in your university work are you most proud of?
* What interested you about applying to this hospital/department?
* Why do you want to work here?
* When are you available for work?
* Why did you train as a radiographer?
* What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
* What kind of machines/software do you have experience of?
* Can you work under pressure?
* What would you do in this situation...?
* What do you think of working in a group?

These are potential questions you may ask the interviewers:

* Do you have a preceptorship programme? Could you please describe it?
* What are some of the opportunities for progression?
* Does the department/hospital have plans for expansion or reduction?
* Have you implemented the career progression framework?
* Do you provide protected study time?