



# Career Development Toolkit for Higher Education Professionals

Interactive Templates and Activities to  
Reinvigorate your Career

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## Start your career development here

Careers in Higher Education (HE) are changing rapidly as institutions adapt to a global marketplace for students, and as the political and economic landscape becomes more challenging. Traditional career structures are fast disappearing and new areas of work are emerging. How can you manage your own career development through these turbulent times? How can you make sure you are best placed to exploit new opportunities?

This interactive guide will help you:

- Reflect on the skills and expertise you have to offer
- Identify opportunities for progression
- Find out how others have developed their careers
- Learn what skills will be in demand in HE in the future
- Pick up practical hints and tips for your career development
- Help you take control of your own career



Use the activities in this toolkit for inspiration as you work through each step of your career planning.

## About the author



Lisa Carr is a careers consultant and coach who works with a range of public and private organisations including the University of Warwick and Warwick Business School, where she coaches Executive MBAs. She began her career as an HR manager in the energy industry and spent a number of years lecturing for the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. After qualifying as a Careers Guidance practitioner she has worked with a wide range of clients from undergraduates through to senior academics and company directors.

## Identify your skills

It's easy to lose sight of what you can offer at work, especially if you have worked in the same role or institution for a while. A critical ingredient in career progression is the ability to articulate your existing skills and identify those you want to develop further.



To progress as a Higher Education professional or manager, it's likely that you will need to demonstrate these core skills:

- **Strategic thinking** - The ability to grasp the big picture and to spot long term opportunities.
- **Project management** - Being able to co-ordinate complex programmes, plan long term, marshal resources and deliver on time.
- **Leadership** - Setting a direction, inspiring and motivating others and holding yourself and your team to account.
- **Innovation** - The mindset to think beyond the obvious, to bring a fresh approach to issues and to generate creative, but workable, ideas.
- **Managing stakeholders** - Building strong relationships with and influencing those individuals, departments and organisations crucial for success in your role.
- **Team working** - Being sensitive to colleagues' needs and willing to support them in their work.
- **Interpersonal and communication skills** - The ability to communicate ideas clearly, to be sensitive to individual's needs and to adapt your communication style.
- **Flexibility** - The ability to apply your skills, personal qualities and expertise to deliver results across a range of activities in different environments.



**Task:** What other skills and qualities do you think are critical to your current role?

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**Activity:** Identify 2 or 3 types of roles which you might like to target in future. Find advertised vacancies for similar roles on [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk). View the person specs for these roles.

List some additional skills and qualities which are essential to your target posts.

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**Activity: Skills audit**

Add those skills you have identified as critical in your field and target roles onto the chart. Now rate your existing level of skill in those areas. Consider recent performance appraisals, feedback from colleagues, superiors and customers.

Skills Audit Chart



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*Tip: Undertaking a 360% feedback exercise can be really helpful in identifying your strengths and skills. Check out whether your institution offers these tools. You may also want to take the skills audit into your next career development meeting with your boss and ask for their input into skills required and ask for feedback on your performance.*



**Activity: Skill development targets**

After completing the skills audit, note down skills requiring the most development:

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We will look at how you can develop these skills further later in the Toolkit.

## Futureproof your career

Consider how your role might change and think about how to position yourself for new opportunities within your institution and within the sector. The following illustrate some of the areas of expertise which are increasing in importance in HE.

### Globalisation

Demand from emerging economies has led to a wider international mix of students on UK campus and these students are often key to the institution's survival. Institutions are increasing using innovative ways of tapping into this market, including overseas campuses and strategic partnerships with institutions abroad. Experience of attracting international students, tailoring services to this group, adapting processes to their needs and working in and with overseas institutions is likely to be of real benefit. Particularly valuable will be experience of markets where the UK competes most heavily for students and research contracts.

### Customer service and the student experience

The recent fee rises and changes to state funding in the UK has led to greater competition for students. Twinned with a change in the mindset of students to that of 'paying customers' there is an increased emphasis on delivering a great student experience, both from the centre and from faculties. Improving services for students, working directly with student groups and achieving positive student feedback are now more important than ever.

### Commercial focus

As the proportion of an institution's income from public sources declines, there is greater reliance on income generation and seeking sources of commercial and private sponsorship. A track record of working with private sector partners, raising income from external parties and spotting opportunities for sharing costs and facilities will really prove your worth.

### Widening participation

Increasing recruitment from socially disadvantaged groups remains a key issue for institutions. Any experience of Widening Participation outreach work, tailoring services to this group and removing barriers to entry has real career currency.

### Organisational efficiency

With the squeeze on budgets and the need to deliver customer-friendly services, there is a renewed emphasis on improving operational processes whilst maintaining quality. Showing you can deliver a great service with limited resources and any evidence of improving the end user experience are all signs of a proactive approach.

### Management of change

Continual organisation restructuring and changes to institutions' offerings, and the way services are delivered, are facts of life in UK Higher Education. Global trends, the prolonged recession and shifts in Government policy are only likely to increase the pace of change. The ability to predict and respond proactively to external change and being able to deliver change programmes has become a crucial skill for senior staff in HE.





## Kate Dodd - Academic Registrar, University of York

### Q: How did you reach your present position?

Having worked as a careers adviser for 17 years, I found myself wanting more strategic and managerial responsibility and applied successfully to become the Director of a Russell Group Careers Service. Moving into management was a great learning curve. After 4 years I was seconded into a wider role, as Director of Student Services, which I was later appointed to permanently. After a few years, I took the opportunity to study for an MBA in Higher Education Management to facilitate a move from being a functional specialist with a background in careers work to be a senior manager of a much wider portfolio. This enabled me to take on a new role as Director of Student Life at another University and from there I moved, after 4 more years, into my current position as Academic Registrar at the University of York.

### Q: What have been your best career decisions?

Taking the MBA in Higher Education Management. Apart from the invaluable learning, I made a great network of friends doing other types of work in academic and non academic roles in the sector.

I also got involved in my professional body nationally, including at a strategic level, and built strong networks within my institution. This left me reasonably aware of the wider institutional context and this all helped prepare me for management roles later on.

### Q: Anything you wish you had done differently?

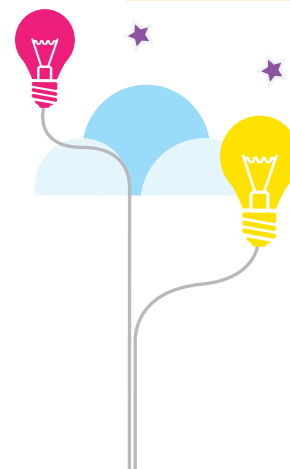
I do wonder why I spent so long in a practitioner role before thinking of applying for promotion into management. In hindsight I think I was just so busy bringing up my children to stop and think about my own career.

### Q: What tips do you have for those aspiring to a similar role?

Be prepared to make lateral job moves between different roles on the same grade in order to get a breadth of experience. Take advantage of temporary positions like secondments and maternity leave posts to get the breaks necessary to do this.

### Q: What advice would you give HE staff about developing their careers?

Develop and feed an inquiring mind; make lots of friendships with colleagues and find out about their work. Invest in your own development and take on more than the basic job so as to see beyond your own specialism.



## Gather evidence

Don't wait until you need to fill out a job application to start tracking evidence of your skills and achievements. You should get into the habit of keeping records of what you have achieved within and outside work in a personal development or CPD file. This will help enormously when you prepare for performance appraisals and job applications.

Your file, which can be in hard or soft copy, can include:

- Copies of performance appraisal notes and feedback from superiors
- Project and work plans
- Key papers and documents you have written and presentations delivered
- Written feedback from customers and other stakeholders
- Schedules of conferences and training courses attended
- Itineraries of work trips
- Your own notes and reflections on recent achievements at work

### Activity: Gather your evidence

When gathering evidence of your skills and expertise, you can draw material from

- Your current job
- Projects you are involved with within your institution, sector or profession
- Training courses and qualifications
- Previous work history
- Things you do outside work, such as volunteering

Start by filling out the chart to see what evidence you already have of expertise in the emerging areas of HE work.

Some examples of the kind of evidence you might use in a job application are given as illustrations to start your thinking.



### Gather Your Evidence Chart

GATHER YOUR EVIDENCE	
What evidence do you have of the following so far in your career and life?	
EXPERTISE Sub-headers	EVIDENCE
<b>Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the needs of international students</li> <li>• Communicating with non-academic staff and students</li> <li>• Securing funding (external partnerships, business cases)</li> <li>• Working on international policy issues</li> <li>• Foreign language skills</li> <li>• Working or being with people of other nationalities</li> </ul>	
<b>Customer Service</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding student experience</li> <li>• Offering excellent service to internal and/or external users</li> <li>• Adopting processes to make the most of your team</li> <li>• Organisation of the learning environment (e.g. a research manager who has recently done a PhD)</li> </ul>	



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### Activity: Contribute to institutional success

In addition to these general areas of expertise, institutions often have their own strategic priorities which reflect how they wish to position themselves competitively within their market. Consider to what extent you are contributing to your institution's strategic plans. A strong contribution here can be key when seeking internal promotion.

Take another look at your institution's strategic plan for the next 2-5 years and consider how far you are helping to achieve the strategic priorities. Reflect on what further opportunities exist to make an impact in your present role.

### Your Strategic Contribution Chart

Your Strategic Contribution		
Step 1: Write down your institution's top 3 priorities over the next 2-5 years		
Step 2: Consider what you have achieved so far for its contribution to each priority		
Step 3: What opportunities can you see to contribute further?		
INSTITUTION'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR	OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTRIBUTE FURTHER
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		



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## Jon Lees - Head of Academic Services and Deputy Director (Student and Academic Services), De Montfort University

### Q: Tell us about your career path

I spent a number of years in programme management at Warwick Business School. After running MBA programmes, I became Administrative Director for a suite of taught Masters before returning to the MBA as Executive Director. My career has therefore been predominantly within an academic department. I'm now 'poacher turned gamekeeper' here at De Montfort where I am part of the University's central administration. Understanding the student experience and lifecycle has actually been really helpful, as I can empathise with and respond to the operational issues faced by faculties.

### Q: What career strategies have proved most effective for you?

Opting to take the MBA was crucial, not only in developing my credibility and knowledge as a manager, but in getting exposure to how things are done in other sectors. Getting involved in the lean initiative at WBS was also incredibly useful in developing my ability to challenge the status quo.

I deliberately built flexibility into my recent career plan. I was fortunate to be offered two quite different roles at the same time. I opted for the job in central administration even though it was, at the time, a sideways move. I figured that this would broaden my skillset and give me more career options in the future. In the event, I'm thoroughly enjoying my new role at DMU. I was also fortunate to be promoted quite quickly proving that you never know what lies ahead. Sometimes you have to think in the longer term.

### Q: How did you find the move from Warwick Business School to De Montfort?

In many ways it was easier than I had imagined after 16 years with one employer. Working with premium fee paying students prepared me well for the current marketisation of undergraduate education. The thought of building up a track record at a new institution and getting to grips with a new working environment did make me a bit apprehensive about moving employers. But I took confidence from the fact that it wasn't much different from working with a completely new leadership team at the Business School. I'd say to people "You have more transferable skills than you think. Go for it!"

### Q: What other tips do you have for other HE professionals?

Try to see organisational change as an opportunity. It can be difficult at the time and it is easy to get disheartened, but change can often make you stronger. You can get too comfortable working for the same employer for a long time. With hindsight, I probably should have moved institutions sooner than I did, although some of my proudest career achievements came during my last year at Warwick.

Think beyond your day job when developing new skills. I took on a role as a school governor and that exposed me to a completely different leadership style and approach in a very different context. At a difficult point in my career, it helped to build my confidence that I had something to offer in the outside world.

## Identify your options

You may already be clear about the career path you aim to take within your institution or within the sector. For others, things aren't so clear. Completing the activities in this Toolkit and learning about the experiences of other successful HE professionals in our Profiles may trigger some ideas of future roles and paths.



For most people, there is no clear career path ahead – just a series of potential opportunities. The key steps are to:

- Clarify what you actually want out of your next role and your career in general
- Investigate what roles and opportunities might be available to you in the short and longer term
- Start building your skills and experience to be best placed for these opportunities



### Activity: Career interests quiz

You have already reflected on the skills and expertise you can bring to a new position. How you use these in your career will depend on a great number of factors. Completing this exercise will help you identify your own personal priorities at this stage of your career:

1. What key skills and areas of expertise do you currently possess? (Look back at the earlier exercises)
2. Which of these skills and areas of expertise are you most keen to use in your job?
3. What kind of people do you want to work with?
4. What kind of organisational environment do you find most motivating?
5. What aspects of your current and previous jobs do/did you find frustrating?
6. What are your personal values at work? (You will need to find a role and institution in tune with these)
7. What hours are you prepared to work?
8. How mobile are you? What is your maximum commuting time?
9. How much, if any, time are you prepared to spend away from home in your work?
10. What is the minimum salary you will accept? What would you ideally like to secure? What employee benefits are important to you?
11. Anything else which is important to you in your job?



Your answers to these questions will give you clues as to the criteria to use when selecting your next role. This can be helpful if you are suddenly offered an opportunity which you hadn't applied for or predicted. You may decide to compromise on one or more factors for a short time in order to develop your career longer term.

Now you should be a little clearer on what you are looking for and what you can offer. How do you match this to opportunities?

Fortunately, Higher Education is a sector which is very transparent in terms of openly advertising opportunities. A quick browse of [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) will quickly bring up potential opportunities at a range of institutions nationally and internationally.

But this is unlikely to be sufficient as a job hunting strategy

- Nationally, up to 80% of job roles are not openly advertised but filled through informal means. In the Higher Education sector, most roles will still be advertised but many will already have internal candidates identified as frontrunners. Don't wait until a position is advertised to express an interest. Networking to find out about upcoming opportunities and to position yourself for the role can prove really fruitful.
- Not all jobseekers are in a position to move long distances for new opportunities at other institutions. Being proactive in growing your role and shifting across into a new post in advance of being appointed permanently can give you more options to develop your career within your existing institution.



You can significantly enhance your own career development and chances of promotion by creating your own opportunities.

## Simon Ells - Head of Admissions, Birmingham City University

### Q: How did you get into student recruitment?



I began my career in the finance department as a new graduate back in 1989. That was a temporary position which was then made permanent. After a year an opportunity came up as a Finance Officer and then as a Deputy Faculty Registrar. I then moved back into central administration as senior administrator responsible for awards ceremonies and student assessment before moving back into the faculty side as Faculty Registrar. An opportunity then arose for promotion as a Head of Division within Academic Registry and I took up this post as Head of Admissions and UKBA Compliance.

### Q: Was this always your career plan?

I can't say that I ever had a career plan. HE is one of those sectors where there isn't really a defined career ladder. You just have to spot opportunities as they arise, and be prepared to move roles and departments to develop your career. I think I am unusual in having pursued my career so far within a single institution

### Q: Which aspects of your work experience have helped you progress the most?

Spending time in Finance early in my career was really helpful as any HE manager needs to understand how to manage budgets. Managing staff is also a key skill which helped me progress. I have spent the past few years managing a range of activities which are absolutely central to the success of the University and are at the heart of the student experience: student enrolment, assessment, admissions and quality assurance, and this has stood me in good stead.

**Q: Which areas of expertise do you think will be in demand in the future?**

Corporate governance and compliance with UKBA regulations are proving to be absolutely critical to the institution's survival and experience in these areas is becoming increasingly valued. The profile of marketing and student recruitment is also being raised as competition for students gets fiercer. Providing efficient student processes is also vital, as is enhancing the student experience.

**Q: What tips do you have for those aspiring to a similar role?**

Make sure you get broad experience in both central and faculty roles. Aim to get a job with responsibility for staff and finance early on as these are always a selling point when you are seeking promotion. And consider taking a Masters degree in higher education management as this is now becoming more of a differentiator between applicants.

**Q: What do you like most about your job?**

I love being part of the education of the next generation and trying to improve young people's experience of University is a great motivator.

**Grow your role**

Having identified areas which interest you and skills you would like to develop, think creatively about ways you can develop within your present role. Your negotiating power can be strongest where you already have a track record of success and your boss should be interested in any suggestion which develops your skills and which helps retain and motivate you. He or she may be delighted to consider growing your role in order to cope with limited resources or to cover a colleague's work.



This may require working at a level which is not strictly commensurate with your salary or job level for a short time. This situation is likely to be temporary however (and you can always take your new skills and experience elsewhere if it is not). See this as an opportunity to take control of your career and try something new.

Options include:

**Work project**

Develop a new project around your existing role. This could be related to one of your institution's strategic objectives and could include a feasibility study for a new service, evaluation of a recent initiative or setting up a cross-institution working group.

**Join a project team**

Look out for opportunities to represent your department on an institution working group or project team. Consider joining a national or local project either within HE generally or for a professional body. Your commitment could vary from couple days a month to a short one off project. As well as direct skills development, this will give you a great insight into what is happening externally and offers fantastic networking opportunities.

**Partner with a colleague**

Offer support to a colleague working on an area which interests you. You could cover their annual leave, act as a sounding board for their ideas or ask to shadow their work with a view to helping them deliver later on. This approach works well with colleagues at the same level as well as more senior colleagues.

**Attend training and professional events**

Identify training courses and conferences in the skills and issues which interest you. When making a case for funding or time off, offer to share the materials and/or to cascade the training to your colleagues. Investigate what training opportunities exist within your institution which may not require an attendance fee.

Keep track of short training events and meetings which are advertised as open access at your institution or with your professional body.

**Develop expertise**

Develop your own area of expertise in an issue of real interest. Research the topic, network with colleagues who work in this field to find out more and make it known this is an interest of yours. Your enthusiasm will gradually become known and you should start to be approached to do related work. This works especially well when your interests coincide with an area of increasing importance for your department or where there are existing knowledge gaps.

**Offer to manage staff**

If you need more line management experience but your department structure limits opportunities, offer to train a new member of staff or supervise temporary staff. Investigate opportunities to mentor less experienced staff, either within your institution or externally.

**Job swap**

There is an increasing trend for institutions to promote or allow job swaps between staff in similar roles in different departments or institutions. You will need to make a case to show how this will help your work. For example, working in a department which uses your services can give you a valuable customer perspective. The job swap could also be overseas, perhaps in a partner institution.

*Tip: Check out funded opportunities to spend a week in another European institution through the ERASMUS programme. Ask your HR department for more information and application timescales.*

**Take a secondment**

Maternity leave cover, cover for long-term sickness absence or offering to fill a gap whilst the institution advertises for a permanent replacement can all offer possibilities. The selection criteria might be more relaxed for secondments, allowing you to move into roles which normally require more experience. This can be a fantastic opportunity to move upwards (roles are often made permanent if the jobholder decides not to return or no suitable external applicant can be found). Consider sideways moves to get exposure in a new area.

**Volunteer**

Consider volunteering outside work. The ideal volunteer opportunity will link in some way to areas of work you'd like to get into (e.g. volunteering in schools and with teenagers if you want to get into student recruitment) but choose something which genuinely interests you. Any volunteer role will develop your interpersonal and managerial skills and demonstrates initiative and good time management. It might also help you get greater clarity on the type of roles you would most enjoy, within or outside HE.

You might be wondering where you could possibly find the time. Some volunteer posts require a regular commitment, although that might only be an hour or two a week. Taking a couple of days annual leave, or even suggesting your whole department volunteer as part of your institution's community programme, might allow you to experience volunteering in a manageable way.

Check out national sites such as [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk) or [www.timebank.org.uk](http://www.timebank.org.uk) which you can search by location and area of interest. Your institution's Students Union may have a volunteering team or society. Don't be afraid to approach interesting organisations directly for a discussion on where best they could use your skills. Check out the [National Council for Volunteering Organisations](#) for ideas.



**Activity – Grow your role**

Which of the areas above provides the most potential for growth in your present role? Add in any further ideas you have.

**Ideas for growing my role include:**

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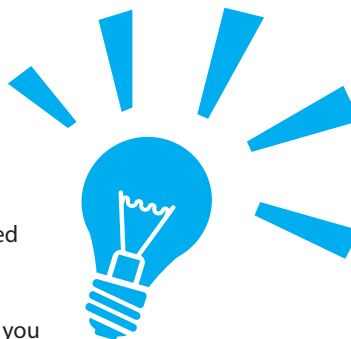
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**Pitching the idea**

Once you have an idea of how you would like to grow your role, consider how you would make it work alongside your present role. You will need to marshal your facts and be prepared to argue your case. The ideal time to do this is at a regular staff development or performance appraisal meeting. If this is not imminent, book a time in your boss's diary to talk about an idea you have had regarding your personal development.

**You might be asked**

- What resources will you need to make this work?
- How much will any training cost?
- How will you fit these extra responsibilities around your current work?
- What will be the benefits to the department?
- What specifically do you want your boss to agree to?

Think about your timing. Perhaps an extra project could be taken on during a quiet period. You may be able to delegate some of your existing work to more junior colleagues (helping their own career development. Perhaps your new skills might allow you to take on some of your own manager's work in future (particularly any parts they don't enjoy!). If all else fails, consider whether you want to offer to take on extra responsibilities in your own time.

**THEA GIBBS Senior Assistant Registrar  
(Strategy and Change), University of Warwick****Q: Your role sounds interesting. What does it involve?**

I'm part of a small team who work rather like internal consultants across the University. My role is to help develop and implement strategic initiatives and to assist senior management in making change happen on the ground. For example, my team are currently working on enhancing student satisfaction, widening participation issues, research infrastructure and developing the University's European strategy.

**Q: What skills are needed in your work?**

It's all about developing relationships, having a strategic perspective and understanding the needs of your stakeholders and customers. I began my career as an information professional in the commercial sector and that ability to be analytical and to think in terms of how information can support effective decision making has stood me in good stead.

Of course, general management skills such as managing staff and budgets and project management are also very helpful. In fact I have found over my career that, it doesn't really matter what the subject matter is as long as you have a good set of skills, a curious mind, professional integrity and a positive approach. You can always learn the subject matter on the job, although it's worth developing a basic understanding to demonstrate your aptitude at interview.

**Q: What strategies have you used to develop your own career?**

I took a decision to expand my horizons by moving from a central administrative role to take up a secondment in the School of Engineering. I wanted to move out of my comfort zone and stretch myself. I also found experiencing academic life from within a faculty very useful in developing my perspective and this provided a bridge into my present role.

I decided early on that I wanted to work part time in order to balance work and family life. That led to me moving from the private sector into higher education, where part time working is viewed more positively. I have worked in an 80% role for a few years now, which I find is the best of both worlds – I am treated as a full time member of staff but I have time and energy to devote to my family too.

**Q: What advice would you give to others who want to develop their career?**

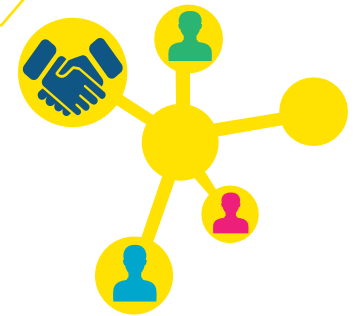
Timing is crucial, in terms of your personal as well as your professional life. Don't underestimate the energy required to make a career move a success. Choose a time when you don't have too many demands in your personal life so you can really give it your best shot.

Show that you can be flexible and are willing to go above and beyond the operational aspects of your role. Demonstrate that you are concerned with the wider strategic vision of your organisation. Support colleagues and fellow professionals with their challenges and show that you are willing to help your institution in any way you can.

Finally, don't be afraid to aspire and to think big. When looking at people in senior roles don't think "I could never do that." Think "Why shouldn't that be me?" Have faith in yourself to develop the skills you need and take a chance to extend your comfort zone. Remind yourself of all the skills you have developed and have confidence in what you can bring.

**Network for success**

Networking provides the most effective way of seeking out job opportunities and learning about what different job roles can offer. Many HE professionals feel that they "ought" to be networking more to advance their career but don't know how. Here are our tips to discover new ways to network.

**Find networking opportunities****Professional bodies**

Join professional bodies and become an active member, locally or nationally. You will meet more senior members of your profession and colleagues at other institutions, and possibly outside the sector. You could offer to join a subgroup, run a training session for professional colleagues or write content for their website. Representing your profession can raise your profile within your institution and is evidence of a desire to learn and an insight into the world outside.

**Network online**

Ensure you post a profile on LinkedIn and check out what groups exist for your profession and institution. Contributing to online discussions and asking questions or posting resources can lead to invitations to link in or to meet a wider group of colleagues within and outside your institution. Comment on others' professional blogs or consider starting one of your own.

### Events

Find out what short training courses, professional events and conferences are being run within your own institution and elsewhere in the sector. Consider who might be attending. Even if the subject matter doesn't excite you, this can be a valuable opportunity to meet decision makers, to demonstrate your interest in looking beyond your immediate role and to find out more about what others do.

### Project teams

Ask about project teams and forums which are open to new members within your institution. Representing your department on these can give you a fresh perspective on your work and can bring you to the attention of a far wider group of colleagues.

### Training

Short courses, conferences and longer programmes leading to a formal qualification offer a fantastic opportunity to get to know professionals in other institutions and fields.

### Alumni networks

Find out what alumni networks exist for the various schools, universities and training institutions where you have studied. As well as online groups on sites like LinkedIn, the institution may have an alumni office which organises face to face events or which holds a directory of members. Make sure your profile, contact details and interests are up to date. LinkedIn also allows you to find and connect with ex colleagues at previous employers.



#### Activity – Build your network

What would you like to find out through networking?

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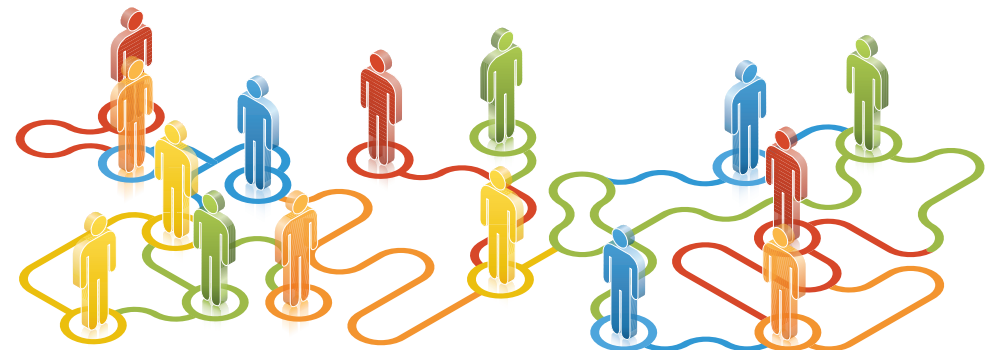
Who is likely to have that information within your institution?

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Who is likely to have that information outside your institution?

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How could you connect with these people?

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Who do you know who may have contacts with that person/ those people?

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What will you ask this person/ these people when you meet?

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If you have targeted an individual whom you are unlikely to meet through organised activities, try to find someone in your existing network who knows that person. You could ask for an introduction on LinkedIn. A quick email asking them if you could pick their brains about a particular issue can work wonders, for example explaining that you are considering moving into their field of work and asking if you can meet for a coffee to find out more about what it involves.

Don't forget that, very often, the person you are approaching is keen to expand their own network and might well learn something from you too.





## Ilze Skujina - Jobzone Manager, University of Nottingham

### Q: How did you get into University administration?

I moved to the UK to study for a degree in politics at the University of Nottingham, after growing up in Latvia. After graduating, I applied for a position on the University's new Graduate Training Programme and was successful. This is a year-long programme that includes placements in four different departments of the University, with the aim of securing a management position at the end.



I was then offered the position of Unitemps Manager, which involved setting up and managing a franchise recruitment agency at the University. The agency has now grown into a key service at the University and my team has expanded as a result.

### Q: What has helped your career development?

I have had some great opportunities for career development, including a two week AUA Study Tour of Japan in 2011. My managers have also encouraged me to get involved in projects outside my immediate work area to expand the scope of my job; I am now in charge of a section within our Careers Service called 'Jobzone'.

I currently have a mentor who is a senior manager at the University and I have found this relationship very valuable. It is extremely helpful to learn from a senior manager with whom I can discuss issues in confidence, who is able to question my assumptions and who helps me see issues from a different perspective.

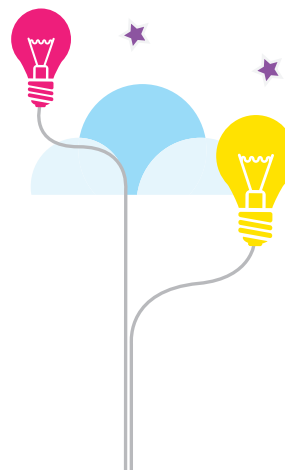
### Q: What skills do you think will be most valued in future?

I think it is about finding the balance between seeing Higher Education in a more commercial way but at the same time not losing sight of its prime purpose and the higher values of the pursuit of knowledge.

HE professionals will need to be more innovative, flexible and agile. We will have to engage positively with an ever growing number of stakeholders nationally as well as internationally. This is likely to include the use of new technologies.

### Q: What advice would you give others about working internationally?

I have been involved in a few international projects and have found the experience very enjoyable and rewarding. However, I think that although an international perspective is fundamental to working in HE, people may have very different reasons for working internationally. The first step is to reflect on your own, personal reasons for developing your career internationally and to be clear about the benefits that you hope to gain. It would also be useful to talk to other HE professionals with experience of working internationally.





## Make it happen

You should now have a much clearer grasp of:

- What skills and expertise you already possess
- What skills are likely to be required in the sector in future
- What gaps exist when preparing yourself for your future roles
- What you are looking for in your career
- What opportunities exist to grow your present role
- How you can network proactively to seek out new opportunities



Now complete the Action Plan and Checklist to ensure you keep on track. Don't forget to add it to your Careers or CPD file.

### Career Development Action Plan Chart

CAREER DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN	
What evidence do you have of the following so far in your career and life?	
ACHIEVEMENTS	HOW WILL I INCREASE THEM?
My strengths	
My weaknesses	
My opportunities	
My challenges	



Click to view the printable version

## Career development checklist



Have you

- Completed your skills audit?
- Set up a careers or Continuing Professional Development file?
- Reminded yourself of your institution's strategic priorities?
- Collated evidence of your achievements in key areas of work?
- Taken the careers interest quiz to clarify your aspirations?
- Researched networking opportunities within and outside your institution?
- Targeted key individuals or groups of people whom you would like to meet for your career development? Have you identified who within your existing network could introduce you?
- Reflected on areas where you could grow your present role? Have you set up a meeting to discuss these with your boss?

You now have the tools you need to take charge of your own career development and create the career you want within Higher Education.



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