

Activity 3. Career Quiz

Work your way through the quiz and answer each question, choosing the answer that **most closely** matches your response. Make a note of the letter of your answer then at the end refer to quiz guide.

Question 1

In your future career would you like to be involved in practical/experimental work?

- A) Yes, I find practical work really interesting
- B) No, I really do not enjoy laboratory work
- C) I'm not sure if I would like to spend significant amounts of time in the laboratory

Question 2

Would you like to work in a post directly related to your degree discipline?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) Not sure

Question 3

Does the idea of further study appeal to you?

- A) Yes
- B) Perhaps, but I would like to work as well
- C) No, definitely not

Question 4

Would you like to utilise your scientific knowledge, although not necessarily doing laboratory or practical work?

- A) Yes, I feel committed to staying within a scientific area
- B) No, I really would like a complete change
- C) I'm not sure

Question 5

www.heacademy.ac.uk/physsci

Do you feel you want to move into an area unrelated to your degree, for example a management training scheme or working in the City?

- A) No, this does not appeal to me
- B) Yes, this is a possibility that really interests me
- C) Perhaps, although I have doubts whether this would suit me

Question 6

Would you like a career that contains a strong element of dealing with people and working as part of a team?

- A) This is not a priority
- B) Yes, I consider interacting with others to be a high priority
- C) I would enjoy this to some extent, but it would not be my main priority

Question 7

Do you already have a clear idea of your future career path?

- A) Yes, I know the type of job that I want to do
- B) I have a few ideas of the types of things that interest me, but I am still considering possible options
- C) No, I am still very unsure of which direction I want to go into

Question 8

Are there factors that restrict the areas of the country you can apply to, for example family/partner restrictions?

- A) Yes, I have to stay in a certain area
- B) No
- C) There are some areas of the country I would not consider applying to

Question 9

Are you fully aware of what your strengths and weaknesses are in relation to possible types of employment? For example, if a particular post requires a lot of report writing and you feel written work is your weakest area, is it realistic to apply because you feel you would enjoy aspects of the job?

- A) I feel able to maximise my strengths in a realistic way in relation to possible applications
- B) I feel my strengths and weaknesses are well balanced
- C) I am unsure about what my strengths and weaknesses are

Question 10

Are you prepared to take a broad view with respect to the type of post or industry that you may apply for?

- A) Yes, if I could not find my ideal post then I would consider other areas
- B) I would really like to stay with my initial career choice
- C) I still do not have a firm idea of what I want to do

Physical science graduates, by virtue of the skills they develop during their courses, have a tremendous amount to offer employers. In the space below list a few of the key employability skills you think employers may associate with physical sciences students.

Activity 3. Career Quiz Feedback and Activities

If you answered mostly (a)

Remaining within the area of science appeals to you. If you feel committed to further study have you considered undertaking a PhD? Some people drift into further study as it delays the decision of career choice until a later date. This is NOT a good reason for committing three years (or longer) of your life. Undertaking research for a PhD is hard work and can be very demanding. For those people who really want to pursue a career in research this can be very rewarding and lead to many different opportunities, including overseas travel, international conferences and working with industrial sponsors. Make sure you have a clear idea of which research area interests you and decide which institution (ideally) you would like to study at. Although funded to carry out the research, you will not be earning the same amount as your friends who have jobs, so be honest with yourself; do you mind not earning a good salary for another three/four years? Most PhDs require a minimum of a 2.i BSc to qualify for funding. Are you likely to achieve this? If you are really committed to doing a PhD but feel, realistically, that you are likely to get a 2.ii then convince the supervisor how keen you are to take on the research. Depending on the source of funding you could still be given an offer.

If you are keen to stay within your field but would ideally like to find a post in industry, are you aware of the opportunities available to you? Further study may still be an option with many employers and there is the obvious advantage of earning a salary at the same time.

Activities

- 1) Find out about what is involved in doing a PhD i.e. what are considered to be the key skills required; what sort of hours would you be expected to work; how much a typical grant pays. Prepare a brief report of your findings (about half page).
- 2) Using the same criteria find out about a typical graduate job within the scientific industry and produce a half page report. The New Scientist may provide you with a few ideas of the types of degree specific vacancies available.

Activity 3. Career Quiz Feedback and Activities

If you answered mostly (b)

Clearly you are looking for a fresh challenge away from your discipline. Spend some time thinking in an honest way about what sort of things are important to you e.g. would you be happy working very long hours in a very high pressure environment? There are many different types of jobs open to you as a science graduate. However, those with high rewards such as large bonuses or high salaries are demanding both in terms of your time commitment and the amount of pressure or responsibility placed upon you. If you rate interacting with others as a high priority then you are unlikely to be happy in a ‘number crunching’ environment that you might find too isolating. Perhaps areas such as technical support, customer care, scientific sales or marketing where your science degree would be valuable might appeal to you.

Perhaps the idea of further study interests you but you would like to work as well. Many of the larger companies will allow you to study for professional exams or to take courses that will benefit you and your employer and they will often pay the fees and expenses involved.

Activities

Find a vacancy advertised by two unrelated companies/organisations. Make a list of key responsibilities, roles and further information (where available) such as salary etc. Highlight the skills required that you consider science graduates possess. Choose posts that interest you and relate to what you consider are your strong points. Include in your report whether further study is required/expected by the organisation and the length of time or commitment required. Produce a brief report of about half a page for each organisation.

Activity 3. Career Quiz Feedback and Activities

If you answered mostly (c)

You don't appear to have a clear idea of which areas you are most interested in and now is the time to start thinking about what options appeal to you. There are many possibilities if you wanted to leave science and there are lots of scientific areas that do not involve practical work. Some scientific related careers are shown below. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, it is just to give you a few ideas you may not have thought about previously.

- Scientific journalism
- Technical author
- Scientific sales
- Customer care
- Technical support
- Teaching
- Information services
- Marketing
- Purchasing
- Scientific recruitment consultant
- Scientific patent officer
- Academic administration

There is a wide choice available outside the area of science. Shown below are some examples which range from management training schemes, incorporating a wide spectrum of companies, to accountancy. Approximately 40% of all of the vacancies advertised in the UK do not specify a degree discipline⁷

- Accountancy
- Retail marketing
- Police force
- Management consultant
- Banking
- Armed forces
- Civil service
- Sales
- Administration
- Prison service
- Management training schemes

For more ideas try the following websites; www.prospects.ac.uk or http://www.hobsons.co.uk/job_descriptions.html

Activities

Your Ideal Job

List the key features you would look for in your idea job. Be realistic (£60k for two hours work each week is everyone's ideal job!) and consider factors such as whether you would be happy sitting at a desk everyday or doing practical work in the laboratory. Once you have listed the specifications, think about which skills would be needed for this and prepare a half page report outlining those skills.

The next step is to think about how you could develop the skills needed before making real applications in your final year. Finally, spend some time relating this specification to real jobs i.e. searching the Internet or in the careers library, then write a half page report on one that *resembles* your ideal job.

7. AGCAS Signpost Sheet, Hilary Whorrall, University of Sheffield, January 2002

Meta data

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