

Taking Time Out after Graduation

Version 10.15

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Taking a Gap Year between school and university or as a graduate has been going on since the 1960s. The old notion of adventurous and dangerous expeditions in far off places and costing a fortune has more recently included activities closer to home and within even the smallest of budgets.

Gap year options

- Get involved in local volunteering in the community.
www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/experience/volunteering
- Learn a new skill (teaching, IT, a foreign language, first aid or sign language for example).
- Set up some work shadowing.
- Extend your part-time job to increase your earning power.
- Take a graduate internship, like our Manchester Graduate Internship Programme (MGIP), its paid and will help you gain skills and commercial awareness.
www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/mgip

A break between study and work (or more study) is an opportunity to do something different for a while. Not a time to switch off and relax necessarily. They say “a change is as good as a rest” so use your time wisely to develop your career. Planning early and setting objectives based on future career ambitions or possibilities could be crucial.

There are a range of reference books available in the Careers Library which give further information and advice on taking a gap year, volunteering and on information on working and living in different countries.

Time-line guide for planning your Time Out

(other specifics may apply depending on nature of activities or programme)

2 years ahead

- Assess your career plans and ascertain personal benefits to taking a gap year.
- Do your target employers or further study providers approve your taking time out?
- Find out what other joiners who deferred have done?

18 months ahead

- Explore activities which enhance your employability and be attractive to employers.
- Attend Taking Time Out workshops and read up on possible opportunities.

1 year ahead

- Check out visa requirements if not arranged for you by the exchange programme.
- Be clear about all the costs of travel, accommodation, living expenses & emergencies.
- Apply to organisations which permit deferred starts. Sell gap year positively.

6 months to go

- Your final project, dissertation and exam revision is the priority. Don't get distracted.
- Review your arrangements (applications, visas, travel, accommodation, money, insurance).
- Set objectives for your time away (see end). Important for “defer” interviews.

3 months to go

- Check health requirements (e.g. injections and first aid kit including insect repellent).
- Attend assessment centres and final interviews for your deferred job.
- Use any company links in the country being visited for contacts or even work.

1 month to go

- Finalise arrangements for your Time Out activity (tickets, visas, contracts, hotel, jobs).
- Accept job offer and negotiate starting date. Review objectives in light of future job.
- Familiarise yourself with new location on web (customs, transport, weather, politics).

2 weeks before

- Think about security (personal alarm, padlocks, money belt).
- Health and safety (identify suitable First Aid kit items).
- Identify necessary items. Buy or borrow.

Final week

- Remind employer of your whereabouts and leave contact details if necessary.
- Packing Check List: www.prospects.ac.uk/planning_your_gap_year.htm
- Check arrangements for travel to and from airport.
- Employer presentations and careers fairs are useful for market/opportunities research.

Applying for jobs or courses while on a gap year

Points to consider:

Over the summer

- *Research preferred sector*
- *Employers*
- *Location and role.*
- *Confirm deferred start policy.*
- *Get to know closing dates or when likely to fill their places.*

September

Recruitment directories for next year entry will arrive in careers services. Use:

- www.prospects.ac.uk
- www.targetjobs.co.uk
- <http://targetjobs.co.uk/uk300/home> <http://top100graduateemployers.com>

October

- Employer vacancies will appear on the Careers Service website. Employer presentations and autumn careers fairs too. Check www.manchester.ac.uk/careerslink
- Postgraduate study opportunities and funding details available from now onwards.

November

- Many Graduate Programme closing dates this month. Allow time to work on these.
- Research company websites for training scheme details, latest news and career paths.
- Careers Service website for employer-led Careers Forums or presentation slides.

December

- Take stock of applications made. Practise online tests via Careers Service website.

January

- First interview invitations. Take advantage of telephone or Skype alternatives.
- Practise selling your skills, experience & knowledge, commitment for role/employer.
- Postgraduate providers have Open Days. Explore virtual engagement possibilities.

February

- If successful at interviews you may be invited to take part in assessment centres.
- Familiarise yourself with the range of activities you will be involved in.
- Interviews and presentations may be possible remotely. Travel may be needed if not.

March

- Take stock of your job search to date. Seek feedback from any rejections.
- Email Careers Service if you need a pep talk or ideas of next steps.

April

- Final interviews may be a feature of this time of year. Well done, stay focused.
- Be very clear about why you want to work for this company and role suitability.

May

- Multiple offers (jobs or postgraduate courses) could be an issue at this stage.
- Weigh up initial reasons for applying. List pros and cons to help you decide.

June

- Summer fairs happen all over UK this month and into July.
- Could be a good time to return to pick up final places.
- Create an impressive story of your time away to dazzle your employer or study provider. This could help you stand out and clinch you a place.

What did you gain from your gap year?

When talking to prospective employers about your gap year either before, during or after you need to have a clear idea of how you will sell the benefits. E.g.

- What skills did you gain?
- If you volunteered – what was the benefit to the organisation?

Be clear about your motivations

Set some objectives.

Have a good story to tell.

Use this table to map out your motivations, objectives and key selling points.

Motivations <i>Before</i>	Objectives <i>During</i>	Sales pitch <i>After</i>
Key goal	<i>Eg. Improve water supply to remote parts</i>	

(Project brief)	<i>of Peru by assisting local population and professional engineers to build supply network</i>	
Skills	<i>Eg. Languages Self-reliance Team working Survival IT Commercial awareness</i>	<i>Eg. Blog Journal List of contacts References Photos Folder of materials</i>
Knowledge		
Experience		
Remote job search	<i>(earlier pages for points to consider)</i>	
Maintain labour market /sector knowledge	<i>Eg. Check employer/course provider website weekly. Make a note of positive news stories. Professional association and industry journal website checks too.</i>	
Re-engagement plans	<i>Eg. Back home or stay with friends. Locate near new job or course and find a part-time job. Confirm start date and any pre-start activities.</i>	Tell us your story for the Careers Service website.

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