

Career options after an arts and humanities doctorate

Hints and tips

Vitae resources: developing the
skills and careers of researchers

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Career options after an arts and humanities doctorate

The broad range of skills and highly specialised knowledge developed during a doctorate appeal to employers in a fantastic array of sectors and occupations. While a doctorate is traditionally viewed as the first step on the academic career ladder, many doctoral graduates in arts and humanities develop careers outside academia, so your options are truly open.

This sheet aims to present you with a brief overview of popular career sectors, and to point to the best resources for finding out more about them. It is not a substitute for talking to a Careers Adviser or someone working in a field that interests you. For advice on networking, getting the most from your University Careers Service and other relevant information, see the Vitae website: www.vitae.ac.uk

What are my options with an arts and humanities doctorate?

This information sheet splits the wide range of careers available into three areas:

- Academic research and teaching
- Roles related to academic research
- Looking further afield.

Academic research and teaching

What is it? Many academic careers also begin with two to five years of research as a fellow or research associate, but in the arts and humanities it is possible to secure a lectureship directly after a doctorate. This will be a balance of teaching, research and administration. Competition for lecturing posts is fierce, so a fellowship may be a way to boost your publication record and demonstrate your ability to secure funding – both of these factors are central to academic career success.

Where is the work based? Worldwide, but posts are scarce and specialist research may be carried out in just a handful of sites, so working locations may be dictated by availability. The Arts and Humanities Research Council has provided funding to establish Research Centres across the UK in many disciplines, details of which are on their website (www.ahrc.ac.uk). Fellowships are awarded to individuals, who are usually allowed to conduct their research at any location with suitable facilities.

Vacancies are advertised in the national press (commonly Times Higher Educational Supplement and The Guardian), on the web at specialist sites (particularly www.jobs.ac.uk) and on university vacancy pages. Identifying relevant bodies who fund fellowships can be time-consuming, so seek advice from experts in your institution (ask for advice from the Research Office or Graduate School) or look at the Higher Education and Research Opportunities website (www.hero.ac.uk).

To find out more, talk to academics and researchers in your field about your interests as they may have other suggestions or contacts.

Roles related to academic research

What are these? Arts and humanities research relates to a range of careers:

- Undergraduate teaching may lead to school or FE college **teaching**, and other educational posts, including educational advice and consultancy, are also available, depending on your research area and background.
- **Research** opportunities are available beyond academia in organisations such as charities, cultural development organisations, government bodies, political parties, learned societies, museums and publishing houses.

- Writing articles and your thesis develops writing, **editing** and information management skills which **academic journals** will make the most of. (This often appeals to former researchers as academic publishing offers continued exposure to the research community, the chance to attend conferences and promotes the dissemination of new ideas and opinions.)
- Familiarity with academic life and pressures and academic credibility can give doctoral applicants an advantage in **Higher Education administration**. Universities are not simply educational establishments; they are huge organisations with multi-million pound turnovers and thousands of staff in a range of supporting roles. Just look at the support and administrative departments at your institution!
- Interest in research could lead to a career supporting other researchers working for a **learned society** (supporting the development and promotion of your subject area) or a funding body (administering grants).

Where is the work based? Universities are across the country. The Civil Service has decentralised certain divisions, although is still largely in London, as are many professional bodies and publishing houses (as well as Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh); the AHRC is based in Bristol.

Vacancies are advertised in the national press (The Guardian), selected websites and on individual organisations' websites.

To find out more, look at the occupational profiles on www.prospects.ac.uk and visit your Careers Service.

Looking further afield

A background in arts or humanities research does not have to mean a future in it! At the end of your doctorate it is not unusual to recognise that a career in academia or research will not suit you. Many other doctoral graduates feel the same way and every year they find interesting careers to pursue. Your career options are diverse, so whatever you are considering (counselling, conservation or chartered accountancy!) you will be able to find out more about it by visiting your Careers Service. The range of responsibilities and activities that are common to arts and humanities doctorates (teaching, editing, writing, supervision) will have developed an extensive portfolio of skills to promote to potential employers.

Commercial organisations come in all shapes and sizes and there are many opportunities in small and medium size enterprises (or SMEs). Many different kinds of jobs are on offer: those which ensure the organisation is profitable (financial management or analysis), those which are customer-related (sales or support) and those which ensure the business and its staff are effective and efficient (human resources or IT). If the business environment appeals, you are sure to find an occupation and employer who will match your interests.

If the freedom of academic life appeals, but you have other interests, then self-employment is an option. Arts and humanities doctoral graduates are more likely to work for themselves than any other subject group. You will find that a lot of advice is available and in certain regions grants and awards can help you to set up your new business. Talk to your Careers Service as they will be aware of local agencies and support.

Whatever your career interests, you will find information about the career destinations of recent arts and humanities doctoral graduates at <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae-WDRD-by-subject-Jun-09.pdf> including links to other relevant reports and information.