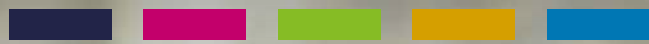


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Welcome to the latest edition of the Varsity Guide to Careers!

There is of course no doubt that many graduates will be facing a tough few years ahead, so we have opted to take a slightly different approach with the Careers Guide this year. We are still, pleased and proud to feature introductions to some of the top firms, graduate schemes and post graduate education opportunities in the UK, Europe and worldwide. However, this year we have also decided to reach out to a few Cambridge graduates from the last ten years or so, and asked them to write about their own experiences since leaving “the bubble”. Many of them have taken less obvious paths since finishing as undergraduates and we hope that you enjoy reading about their experiences! We’ve brought these articles together under the broad heading of “Finding my way”. If this is something that our readership enjoys, then next year we hope to reach out more widely to other Cambridge alumni, so they can share their experiences, advice and insight too! **Mark**

We know that Cambridge offers an array of degrees and, as a result, welcomes a diverse cohort of students every year. This diversity is crucial to the fabric of the University and is also crucial to the world of work. In order to reflect this, the Guide has focussed on showcasing roles as well as alumni who come from a range of backgrounds, and have taken different paths to get to where they are today.

So, whether you are an education student as I was in my first year, or a management

student, like I am now as a finalist, we hope that you take the time to read about the diverse experiences of our alumni and learn about some amazing graduate opportunities, in turn, prompting you to think further about your own career journey. **Rich**

This year’s Careers Guide is exactly the sort of thing I wish I had when I graduated. Inside, the frank discussions of the often unplanned and unexpected ways people navigate through the world are very comforting for those of us who haven’t quite got it all figured out. This year more than most, we need to be kind to ourselves, and give up on rigid notions success that matter far more for other people than to us. I know that all those who are reading this right now will go on to make their own meanings, and find what works for them, whatever that might be, with a little help from your friends at Varsity. **Leah**

Not only do this year’s graduates have to contend with the ever-morphing COVID-rules across the University as they face tough academic challenges, but we are likely to enter a precarious job market at the end. Like you, I am anxious. As I draw towards the end of my PhD, and with it nine continuous years in Higher Education, I am aware of the employment challenges ahead at this precarious time. However, in editing this careers guide I am filled with hope: advice from alumni reminding us to take our time and remain calm. I hope that you too can draw some useful reassurance in the following pages. **Amy**

Finding my way...

Amina Rai graduated from Lucy Cavendish College in 2012 with an MPhil in Geography – Multidisciplinary Gender Studies. She now works as the UNHCR Regional Communication Officer for Private Sector Partnerships Africa.

I graduated from Cambridge with an MPhil in Geography – Multi-disciplinary Gender Studies in 2012. I left university feeling enriched by my academic studies and student life. But the departure from University life can be daunting. While there's no single template for navigating post-University life, here are some things I learnt along the way that helped ease the transition:

1. Be aware of your self-value:

As a student, I sought to be actively involved in initiatives which I was passionate about. This included advocating for students' rights through elected students' unions positions, championing inclusivity and diversity in University governance structures, learning and sharing about social inequalities at academic conferences, and organising social events to keep ourselves sane.

While some might refer to them as extra-curricular activities, I consider these engagements vital in developing practical understanding of working with diverse groups of people, project managing ideas to fruition and helping develop competencies that later proved valuable in real work situations.

Your value and agency exists beyond your degree. It's your lived experiences, your non-academic activities, your part-time jobs, the internships and work placements you did while juggling academic work. When applying for opportunities post-graduation, identify the skills you accumulated both in and outside of academia and draw upon them in your applications, interviews and work experiences. You probably have done more than you think.

2. Be open:

The collegiate system offers you the opportunity to exchange thoughts with students from different academic backgrounds. In the dining hall, I shared meals with veterinarian studies students, law students, biology

and mathematics students; I lived with physicists and business majors; learnt from women who have gone on to work for top consultancy firms, start-up research think tanks, run in municipal elections. Too often we operate in silos based on our own individual identities – socially, economically, racially, culturally, academically and career-wise etc. The collegiate system disrupts that.



Cambridge's collegiate system stirs the pot in a fantastic way. It allows us to foster connections with people who are different from us. And while at times those differences can spark conflict or challenges, these potentially uncomfortable situations are the most valuable and rewarding to work through. They expand our minds, make us confront our values and beliefs, and open doors to unique insight. Try to hold on to these different perspectives and extend them beyond the relationships you fostered in Cambridge to the people you may come across in post-university life. I truly believe diversity breeds innovation, so diversify your network and friendships.

3. Be humble:

When you leave Cambridge, keep hold of your student lifestyle until you're financially secure enough to be adulting. When I left Cambridge, I returned home to live with my parents and worked full-time for the same organisation I originally left to pursue my MPhil. It helped me pay off some student debt and save up for moving out. I went on to work for not-for-profit organisations in Canada, but my desire was always to have a career in the field of humanitarian relief.

Despite having accumulated a good number of years of work experience, including Executive Director of a small organization in Vancouver, I ended up doing an internship with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency in Copenhagen, Denmark. It may have been considered a step back career-

wise, but for me, it was a step forward to my dream. I worked hard during my internship – instead of just doing the tasks assigned to me, I tried to think outside of the box. One of my senior colleagues, now the current Head of Global Communications for UNHCR, advised me to get through my administrative work straight away so that I could focus on innovative projects that could bring greater utility to the organisation. It worked. I was offered a contract to work for UNHCR before my internship ended and have been with the organisation ever since, now based in Nairobi, Kenya. Had I not taken up that internship, I would not be where I am now.

4. Be self-reflexive and woke:

Consider this: The Cambridge bubble is not meant to incubate you in academia (as romantic as that may seem). It's a space of incredible privilege that is meant to give you the means and resources to work on yourself. Throughout your University life, use the Career Service, use the counselling services, use the Students' Union Advice Service, use the Cambridge Students' Union, use it all. Use these university resources to confront your fears, to challenge your perspective and to give you the tools needed to forge a path that you will be truly content with. Self-reflexivity affords us the ability to look inward and work on areas of self-improvement and growth. University services and resources are there for you to embark on that journey.

Aside from looking inward, keep an outward perspective of your position in society. Cambridge's elite history brings with it a slew of customs and traditions that at times made me weary. But I sought to embrace the experience for what it offered, recognizing my own immense privilege as a Muslim woman of colour born in the Global North having been able to attend university in the first place. In the current climate where we are reconfiguring social constructs of race, gender, and class, being aware and woke of who has access to opportunities and who doesn't (and why) is an invaluable necessity now more than ever.

Another thing on this: As you plan your next steps and

perhaps consider taking a gap year to volunteer abroad, think critically about how your own privilege will play out where you are. Fortunately, the humanitarian relief sector is undergoing a very necessary reimagination of a framework that exists outside of colonial tropes and archaic binaries between benefactor and beneficiary relationships. Don't fall victim to idea that a young graduate from the Global North is able to espouse

expertise and skills not otherwise found in the Global South (no one has time for that anymore).

5. Be brave:

When I was close to finishing up my time in Cambridge, I began to feel jittery about my next steps: How could an MPhil in Geography - Multidisciplinary Gender Studies provide me a career path aside from making me more woke than I came in? I remember sharing my during a formal dinner at Lucy Cavendish with Dame

Anne Warburton, a past President of Lucy Cavendish and had a decorated career as a diplomat. She was a formidable woman.

Sitting next to her in the dining hall, she asked about my studies and plans afterwards. I blubbered to her about my indecisiveness and anxiety, unsure if I wanted to stay in Cambridge another year to serve a sabbatical as the then Graduate Union President or return to Canada. She could sense my nervousness. She stopped eating, turned to me and lowered her gaze and in a calm but stern tone simply said: "Be brave. Just be brave."

Dame Warburton passed away in 2015 but her simple advice have stayed with me in all my major changes in life.

In moments where I am packing my bags and moving to the next duty station, feeling the same swirls of anxiety in my belly, I remember Anne. There are times when you are not sure if you are ready to take on the next step – life is not waiting for you to be ready and most of the time the only thing stopping you is your own self-doubt. Override it. Be brave. Just be brave.



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Graduate Q&A

Navya Ravulapalli Studied History at Robinson College.

Why did you choose P&G?

Although I'd tried several different career options during internships, such as consulting or law, nothing seemed to quite fit. After speaking to several people from P&G at a careers fair, I realised that the qualities that I'd most appreciated from other jobs such as creativity, analysis and early responsibility were all offered here. Everyone I met was really invested in getting to know you as an individual throughout the interview process, and there is a huge investment in graduates through the highly-respected training programme. The final Commercial Careers Academy was an amazing way to try out the role through a case study, and to see the impact that the huge brands at P&G have on everyday consumers.

How did you decide which role to apply for?

I knew that I was interested in working in Sales or Brand from the start as they suited my previous experiences, such as being on the Ball Committee or volunteering with Pink Week. Watching the videos on the website and YouTube about what a typical day would look like, as well as speaking to as many people across functions as possible were the best ways to truly understand what the different roles involved. The ability to gain ownership of your business from early on, negotiate with external suppliers and work with a multi-million pound budget from Day 1 attracted me to sales specifically.

What is the work/life balance like at your company?

P&G places a huge emphasis on ensuring that all employees find the right balance for them. Alongside options for flexible hours and working from home, there are also many social activities on offer to get involved in. As well as several sports clubs including football and netball, P&G also has a band and a dedicated network for new/recent grads which

puts on socials and training every 3 months. There are also many charitable and community initiatives, such as from providing careers advice to disadvantaged students to raising money or volunteering with our charity of the year – this year it's Little Roo, a neonatal care provider.

One of the highlights of the year is the annual Football World Cup, where employees from around the world come together for a weekend – the most recent one was in Croatia! P&G is a *build from within* company, which means they encourage a healthy work/life balance to build a long and sustainable career rather than burning out early.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

Definitely the people that I get to work with on a daily basis. There is such a variety of people, both across functions and even doing the same role. Everyone is passionate about what they do, and more than happy to take time out of their day to help you or even just to catch up! You get exposure to employees at different stages of their career as a new graduate hire, since you're assigned a buddy who typically started a year before you, as well as a more senior mentor to help you develop your career how you want it.

What's your top tip on applying for P&G?

Don't be afraid to ask questions as it's so important to really understand what your chosen role involves. By speaking to as many people as possible during careers events, you can truly understand whether P&G is right for you as well as gain a better insight into the company culture. P&G is most interested in understanding what you've skills you've gained, and how they apply specifically to the role you're applying for as well – these can be extra-curricular, academic or even any personal interests you have.



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Henry Male

BA MSci in Natural Sciences,
University of Cambridge (2013)
PhD in Organic Chemistry,
University of Cambridge (2018)



Anna Miles

BSc in Biochemistry, University
College London (2014)
MRes in Medical Science,
University of Cambridge (2015)
PhD in Medical Science,
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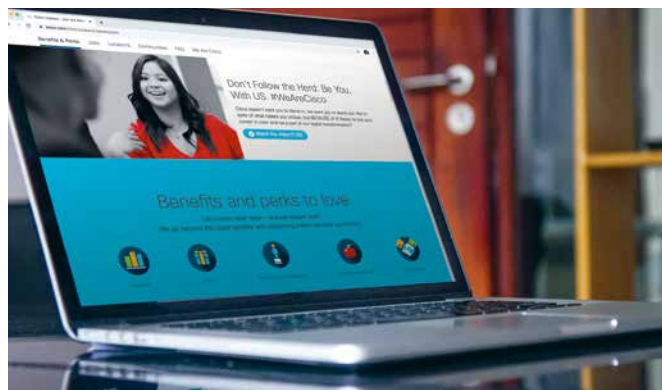


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James Whistance-Smith

Maths, & Computer Science,
Working for Cisco's Ensoft Software Engineering Team.

How did you start working for Ensoft/Cisco?

I reached the third year of my degree knowing that I wanted to do something that makes a difference within a small, vibrant setting that I would feel a part of.

I visited the careers fairs and collected the obligatory fliers and freebies but already knew the majority were of no interest. I knew Cisco as 'the' cutting edge networking company and was intrigued by the idea of Ensoft as a small team with its own culture and identity composed of highly motivated and like-minded folks.

I went along to a presentation by a senior manager within the Ensoft team and chatted afterwards to recent graduate employees that seemed to have a real passion for both the work and the environment. It seemed to tick all my boxes and applying was a no-brainer.

What was the recruitment process like?

The application process couldn't have been easier, I simply submitted my CV and was contacted within a couple of days inviting me to the next interview day. The interview day consisted of a logic test followed by two interviews. I was back in the college common room within two hours and feeling optimistic but not wanting to get my hopes up. I received a job offer shortly after that.

Can you describe what you do for the company?

Primarily I'm a project and people manager and take great pride in trying to organize projects that give my team challenging and interesting work suited to their strengths and individual development. However, my role is still very technical with plenty of scope to get hands-on in software development as well as technical design and review work.

Beyond the core work I'm involved in various 'virtual teams' such as helping with technical and network support, organizing Cisco-Ensoft social activities (including a family weekend away in May 2019) and looking out for people's wellbeing as a mental health first aider, to name just a few...

What's it like working in Cisco's Ensoft team?

We enjoy the benefits of being part of a huge, progressive and forward-thinking company that additionally has a culture and dynamism of a small site.

As part of Cisco we have the opportunity to innovate and create software solutions targeted to the rapidly expanding needs of the world's biggest service providers and tech companies as well as enjoy the perks of working for a big company.

However, our identity as a small team with our own culture is a real positive. There are the small things like the office games (pool, table tennis, etc) and weekly breakfast, the daily self-organised sports clubs (football, climbing, running, etc) through to the organised social events such as rafting, the annual walking weekend or family summer BBQs.

Ultimately, it's a place where I find the work interesting and challenging, feel as though I'm realising satisfying career development with plenty of scope to go further and enjoy socialising with the people that I work with.

What kind of work can people expect to be doing in their first year?

We expect to get new graduates working on production code and contributing as part of a development team in under a month. This typically means being assigned a module of code to write and test. At the same time, the close team structure includes a mentor for new graduates, which means there is plenty of support.

Can you describe what you look for in an applicant?

We look for people who work hard and take pride in their work, and that should be backed up by a strong academic record. Some experience is useful, though not essential (we offer excellent training!). What we really want to see is an enthusiasm for software engineering - it's great to find recent graduates who have developed applications or run computer systems.

Finding my way...

Patrick Wernham graduated from Downing College in 2018 with a degree in History.

There's nothing like starting work in a local restaurant and being asked what sixth form college you go to, two weeks after your graduation, for bringing you down to earth with a bump.

Most graduates will not have the misfortune of having such a baby face. But there is an experience more widely felt. After the highs of graduation, and indeed your entire time at Cambridge, there can be a real sense of 'what now?'.

I think it is doubly true for people like me who take a post-university gap year. There were undoubtedly times when I found it hard to justify, both to people I knew at University and the almost disbelieving customers in the restaurant where I worked, why I was doing it. Sitting in my childhood bedroom in the long evenings of winter, it was hard not to think that I should be well into my high-flying career by now.

I should add that this pressure wasn't coming from one particular source. The Careers Service, for example, do a good job of showing you the variety of things Cambridge grads go on to do. It's more an ephemeral pressure, it's hard not to feel like having had the benefits of a Cambridge education that we should all be leaping off into the rest of our lives without a moment to lose.

But taking a year off after graduation was the right thing for me, and despite those moments of self-doubt and occasional quizzical looks, I am entirely glad I did it.

Cambridge is an incredibly intense place. As we all know, the workloads from the degree alone can be stretching. Yet I always thought one of the main advantages of Cambridge was the huge range of 'extra-curricular' opportunities to get involved in. Those require energy too, though. The long days in the *Varsity* office, in my case, were not without cost. Put simply, I was exhausted.

I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life, or even the next few years. Even if I had known, I don't think I had the energy or motivation to throw myself into it as I would have liked.



So I took some time out. I did the usual fare: some boring months of working to save up for the more exciting months of travelling. After the intense years in academia, I found that I had the energy to return to things that I'd perhaps neglected. I suddenly had so much time to read for pleasure. I drastically improved my Spanish. Most importantly, I had a load of fun.

All the old clichés have some truth in them too; I'm yet to do anything in my career that has been so plainly demanding as the Saturday night shifts in the restaurant.

Taking that time allowed me to think about what it was I really wanted to do. I now work in the Civil Service, and thoroughly enjoy my work. I am so thankful that

Taking a year off after graduation was the right thing for me, and despite those moments of self-doubt and occasional quizzical looks, I am entirely glad I did it

I took that time to pause, recharge my batteries, and scratch that travel itch.

I realise 'bloke bores on about how special his gap yah was' is a pretty tired trope. But I think in the post-Cambridge context it is worth emphasising. Cambridge has

so much to offer, and I encourage everyone to throw themselves into it. But that shouldn't come at the cost of internalising some of the more pernicious aspects of the place: that by going here, we ought to be rushing off into the rest of our lives the minute we've graduated.

Finding my way...

Sarah Sheard graduated from Homerton College with a BA in Classics in 2016, an MPhil from Newnham College in 2017, and is currently studying for a PhD at Peterhouse. CN: Discussion of sexual harassment, depression.

As I entered the final year of my BA in Classics at Homerton, I did what all good arts students do: weakly threw my hat into the usual rings - consulting, civil service, finance - and caught it when it was promptly chucked back at me. I was hopeless at the recruitment assessments, whether they tested my situational judgement (appallingly naive) or numeracy (still hovering somewhere around Key Stage One). But I was good at Classics and staying on for an MPhil seemed like as good an idea as any, especially when I got full funding.

I had muddled through the undergraduate workload without much issue, but the MPhil was a full-immersion nightmare. It is an intense, nine-month course that ingests undergrads, who respond to set essays, and spits out researchers who design and complete their own projects. I couldn't see it as a process, albeit a tough and demanding one: I just felt lost, a blow that was worsened by the fact that I'd surrendered my entire sense of self to being clever, and now I wasn't smart enough. Two months into the MPhil, my ego in desperate need of validation, I feverishly applied to continue to a PhD. It was, predictably, a bit of a car crash: I got a place, but no funding.

From then on, I didn't feel much of anything, although my depression was at least the high-functioning kind: I was in the library from 9am until 10pm or later, and my work did improve. But even though my thesis was playful, the exact thing I'd wanted to do with my MPhil (I looked at Roman images of sex where the woman is on top), I finished the course feeling hollow and burnt out. A grim experience being sexually harassed by and, frankly, scared of, a fellow student didn't help, and a relationship from my undergrad days ended too. I left Cambridge swearing I'd never be back.

The only thing I halfway enjoyed during that year was the Italian class I took at the Language Centre. A friend mentioned a good website for au pairs and helped me set up a profile; within a week I had connected with a family in Rome, and by September I was on the plane to start a new life. It's hard to explain how much I gained from professionally

hanging out with an eight-year-old girl who repeatedly asked why I was not married yet, if I wanted to marry her octogenarian grandmother, and whether I knew the Frog Pope. She obliterated my neuroses and perfectionism. One of my very first tasks was to escort her to her swimming class on the Rome's famously reliable (and flammable!) bus system. We were running late, and I was stressing out. She placed her hand on my forearm and whispered, sagely: 'you need to take the pill that makes you relax'.

And there was Rome itself, a world of infinite possibilities. I met people from all manner of backgrounds and lifestyles, a million miles from the white, privately-educated and bespectacled crowd of Cantabs I'd spent the last four years with. When I got to spend every day wandering past the ancient architecture I'd spent hours poring over in the library, it dawned on me how sad it was to reduce this city, and myself, to the numerical marks I'd only recently obsessed over.

During my free time, I kept reading about ancient Rome in the library at the British School at Rome, and I steadily worked up to another PhD application: I concluded it wasn't time wasted if I enjoyed the reading, and I felt less invested, less like my soul was at stake if it didn't work out. Two universities offered me full scholarships, and although it was a tough decision, I resolved to return to Cambridge, this time at Peterhouse. As difficult as I'd found my MPhil, the PhD felt like an opportunity for the research I was ready to do; to make the most of the wonderful and vibrant Classics community; to come back on my own terms.

I'm now in the third year of my doctorate, and things are good. I love my research and the new experience of supervising undergrads, which makes me feel both ancient and somehow very close to my own experiences of unconvincingly blagging Greek literature. If I could go back, I'd tell my undergrad self that it all works out. At least, that's what I'm telling myself now.



Finding my way...



Chris McKeon graduated from Gonville & Caius College in 2013 with a degree in History and an MPhil in African Studies.

The only thing I really knew about jobs when I left Cambridge was that there were quite a few that I didn't want.

Unlike a lot of my friends, I hadn't filled my summers up with internships and I didn't want to go into management consultancy or accountancy or corporate law. I wanted to do something different, something exciting, something people would want to hear about at parties. Inconveniently, I had no idea what that was.

This was probably how I ended up causing my parents a small degree of anxiety by moving to Kenya two weeks after a major terrorist incident there to do a vaguely defined media job for three months.

While there, I learned two things. One, culture shock is a thing that exists and can be overwhelming, and two, if you give things a bit of time you can get used to them as even unpromising starts can turn out to be positive experiences.

Once I'd met a few people, learned where to go for basic things like food and worked out how to negotiate Nairobi's terrifying traffic, I even started to enjoy myself. Finding somewhere to play a bit of rugby also helped – it's now almost the first thing I look for when I move somewhere new, so I can have a purpose and find friends beyond work.

After I returned to the UK and failed to get funding for a PhD I spent some time searching for something else to do. I did a bit of freelance writing, but didn't properly commit to it, and volunteered at Citizens Advice but the lack of a clear idea about what I wanted to do morphed into a slightly desperate search for any job in line with my interests.

This was a mistake.

I ended up in Bath doing political risk analysis, which sounds interesting, and I'm sure can be if you work for one of the bigger companies, but in my office it amounted to little more than moderate Googling.

There is little as soul-destroying as having to sit in an office for eight hours a day when there isn't enough work

to justify that time and what work there is contributes nothing to anyone, as far as you can see. David Graeber wrote a book about this, and I recommend it.

Eventually, I realised I didn't have to put up with it. Sticking things out in Kenya had been the right decision, but continuing to stick out a job that doesn't interest you and has no chance of interesting you in the future is futile.

So I quit, and it was one of the best decisions I'd made since leaving Cambridge. It was also a massive gamble. When I left, I had no job to go to, only a four-month training course that would land me a diploma in journalism.

I didn't even really know if I'd be any good at it – I'd done some student journalism (*TCS*, *The Tab*, not *Varsity*), but it had all been sport-focused and fairly casual and I'd had no work experience, unlike almost every other student journalist I could think of.

But somehow, it did work out. Fairly soon after the end of my course I was taken on at the Surrey Advertiser, which was good because it meant I could live at home in south London and save money, but also bad because it meant I could live at home in south London and not be independent (this is just something more of us are going to have to get used to, for socio-economic reasons which we don't have space for here).

Two years later, though, I was able to leave the nest again, this time for Liverpool, which is where I am now, annoying local councils and trying to keep up with the ever-shifting pandemic regulations.

So without being trite, I suppose what I am trying to say here is don't worry if everyone around you has clear goals and you don't, and don't worry if it takes a couple of false starts to find something that suits you.

I know most Cambridge graduates are fairly used to knowing what they want to do and aren't used to changing direction, and it was frustrating and disorienting, but it can work and it's better than getting stuck in a job just for the sake of having a job.

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Attracting the best Graduates into UK Defence



Seb Pollington is a former British Army Colonel and Defence Envoy with 30 years experience. He has taught leadership in graduate development roles at Sandhurst and Cambridge University. He is a visiting lecturer on the Homerton College Changemakers Programme and leadership mentor in sport and business. He now works for NATO after transferring into the Royal Air Force in a long-service role.

There are few times when Defence is not important to the nation. Right now it's playing its part with some of the best young graduates we have seen. Sandhurst intakes are full to bursting. Defence civilian roles are attracting some of the finest talent on offer, and the MOD is promoting people from across a range of backgrounds. With flexible working the norm, the range of graduate talent is exceptional. In my view, hardly a better time to work in Defence.

As the Government's Integrated Review proceeds, it's clear the UK Armed Forces of the future are going to need the very best. And that certainly means from Cambridge.

The UK Armed Forces of the future are going to need the very best. And that certainly means from Cambridge

The IR will define the nation's ambition for the UK's global role and our long-term strategic aims for national security and foreign policy. It'll set out the way in which UK will be a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation; and the vital role of the Armed Forces in a security environment beset by

constant competition, threat and uncertainty.

Defence is a central government department with a mission to protect our country and to provide the ultimate guarantee of its security, prosperity and independence. As well as helping to protect values and interests abroad. We are also facing the changing threats and challenges of the post-COVID world. Staying ahead to build a suitable capability to meet tomorrow's threats, not yesterday's. We are acquiring more versatile and agile forces for the future, and ensuring our people have what they need in what we ask of them. We can't do everything on our own and I have worked in many multinational environments. That is why we continue to work effectively with our allies and partners. It's not just about having the right number of people with the right skills. As the Head of the RAF, Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, said in his virtual Air and Space Power Conference this summer, it's about how we think. In the ambiguous, data-rich and complex future security environment our ability to think differently, challenge the status quo and innovate will be fundamental to success.

Careers in Defence offer opportunities in the Armed Forces, reserves and in civilian roles. Whichever way you want to contribute to the mission; either serving in the British Army ('be the best'), Royal Navy ('life without limits'), Royal Air Force ('live a challenging life'), Royal Marines ('it's a state of mind') or as a civil servant on the Fast Stream Development Programme, where rapid responsibility and promotion may suit you. Cyber careers are also developing particularly quickly. With new evidence that graduates are placing moral, green, life-balance and other factors above money, acting a force for good in the world is what we do. In any case, salaries compare well to most top-end graduate schemes. In the British Army for example, you'll earn around £25k pa while training at Sandhurst and once successfully commissioned in a year, rising to £31k. Figures which look even better when you consider that, for much of the time, your food and board are essentially paid for by Defence.

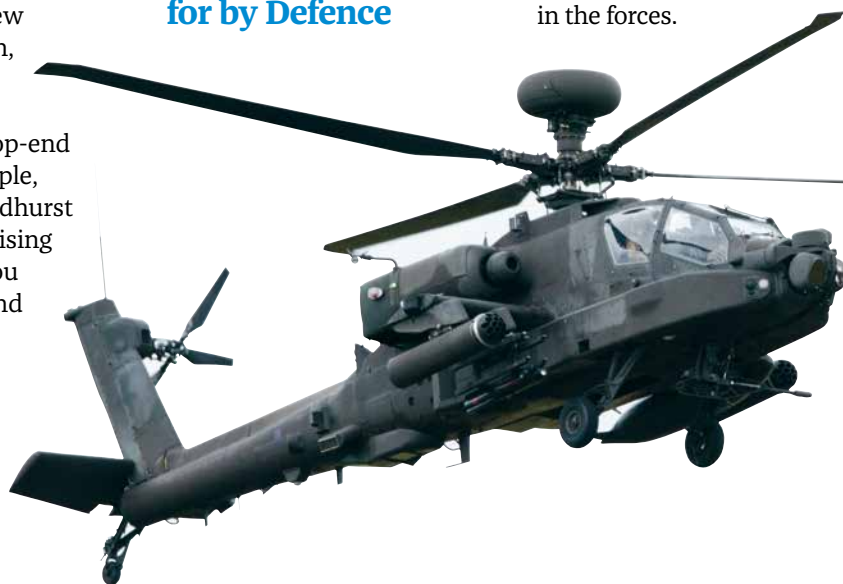
Modern careers in the Armed Forces offer real opportunities to develop leadership skills and experience adventure. We're not just talking about sport, skiing, skydiving, scuba-diving and so on – but travel to parts of the world

where you can make a difference. Not only in conflict, but in conservation, medicine and responses to natural disaster. For me, the British Army's slogan 'This is Belonging', is genuine: you forge meaningful, long lasting relationships with those around you. And yes, there is risk. You may even depend on each other for your lives.

Of course, skills that you develop in Defence are genuinely prized by employers. FDM group, for example, runs a programme especially for ex-forces personnel. As does JP Morgan, Deloitte and most major players in the commercial space. FDM says on its website: "We recognise people who have served in the Armed Forces have many transferable skills ... adaptability,

maturity, responsibility and leadership". And depending on the degree you held before joining, a spell as a military officer could see you find subsequent careers in a number of industries. Our media information world is littered with former officers who've become directors, journalists, solicitors, consultants, PR and finance professionals and even rock stars. No surprise that they speak so highly of life in the forces.

You'll earn around £25k pa while training at Sandhurst and once successfully commissioned in a year, rising to £31K. Figures which look even better when you consider that, for much of the time, your food and board are essentially paid for by Defence



Finding my way...



Leah Wild graduated from Christ's College in 2019 with a degree in Classics.

What did I do after leaving the 'Cambridge Bubble'?

In many ways, I simply did not. I stayed working in Cambridge after graduating. But I wasn't expecting the very different Cambridge which I would experience after passing out of the world of 'Gown' into 'Town'.

As a student, I had spent my Easter terms diligently phoning up the venerable alumni of my very own College, making the ask on behalf of the College for small (and sometimes not so small) financial gifts, to line its coffers and keep students like me afloat in these always trying times. Spinning tales of the times the College had stepped in, rescuing me from almost certain financial ruin, I called upon people to remember their own times as students, and consider making a monthly gift of X pounds a month, which could fund bursary students for years to come. Little did I know at the time how much this was building the skills I would need when entering the world of work.

After graduating with my degree in Classics, I looked around and saw a world in which I wasn't sure what I was supposed to be doing. Having moved into private accommodation halfway through my final year, there was rent to be paid every month, and no parental home to retreat to. I, therefore, had to face the reality that I was now an adult and needed to start acting like it. I needed to find a job.

This is easier said than done. I still have the spreadsheet of the jobs I applied for that summer, which records that I applied to 94 jobs, from across a range of companies and sectors. To keep the bills at bay, I took a job in my local pub whilst sending off these reams of applications: pulling pints by night and writing CVs and cover letters and taking psychometric tests by day. The most depressing part of this list is the section where I record what response I got to my applications, and how most of those cells are blank, from places that don't even deign to reject you. Ghosted by the National Gallery.

In the midst of this, I took a look at the University of Cambridge job page and saw a job listed as 'Development Assistant'. Dimly recalling my Easter holidays on the phone banks at Christ's being run by the Development Office, I clicked into the application and discovered

I applied to 94 jobs, from across a range of companies and sectors. To keep the bills at bay, I took a job in my local pub whilst sending off these reams of applications: pulling pints by night and writing CVs and cover letters and taking psychometric tests by day

to my delight that I was qualified. Finally, somewhere that wanted my Oxbridge degree and idiosyncratic knowledge of Cambridge local history! I sent into an application to one College, and another and another. And then I waited. I hear back. Invited to interview. Invited to multiple interviews! Add interviewing to my list of job-seeking daytime moonlighting.

Eventually, I had two offers going down to the final stages. And then, just like that, I had a job,

a contract through my letterbox, and a starting date. A Development Assistant at Gonville & Caius College. I was still in Cambridge, and still even within the Collegiate system. And yet, from the moment I walked through the Gate of Humility for the very first time as a member of staff, I realised there was a whole new world teeming beneath the surface.

The next few months flew by with all the new things I had to learn: my humanities degree did not prepare me for that many spreadsheets! But I wouldn't change the path I have been on or even the slightly roundabout route of getting there. It turns out that you don't even have to get out of Cambridge to pop the bubble!

Finding my way...



Ant Bagshaw graduated from Cambridge in 2009. He read History and History of Art at Jesus College.

My Cambridge years fizzled out rather than ending with a bang. After a middling performance in History Part 1, and History of Art part 2A, I spent a year as CUSU's education officer and by Easter 2009 I was ready to move on from the University. Looking back on my professional life in the past decade, I tend to have a knack for over-writing a narrative on to what could have been (and felt like it was at the time) a series of unconnected moves between jobs where I never stayed for more than a couple of years.

I'm currently a director-level management consultant working with universities and governments in Australia and I'm just about to complete a doctorate in higher education policy. How did I get here? Before my current job, with Nous Group, I was the Deputy CEO of a media-company-come-think-tank for UK higher education called Wonkhe. It was a job which exposed me to start-up life, the need to sell services and which gave me a public platform and built my reputation. And before Wonkhe I had management jobs in universities, at LSE and the University of Kent. The bit in between Cambridge and Kent was a year working at the National Union of Students and a year in Wales training to teach.

Aside from the obvious - that I tend not to stick at things very long - it's actually a path which has positioned me really well for consulting. I have a reputation in my sector from writing about higher education and got further academic credentials, and I have built networks from my various jobs which have been useful in the UK but also opened doors internationally. I also learned key skills - including business development and management - along the way.

What are the most important things that I've learned looking back?

1. If the job/place doesn't feel right, it probably isn't and you should move on if you possibly can. I've become better at trusting the sinking feeling that a bad first impression can give.



2. Take a critical approach to your workplace. I learned a lot of less-than-useful behaviours from early jobs that I have had to unlearn over time.

3. Build your networks. Opportunities have come up for me because I know people, maintain connections and I build links within my networks. Yes tools like LinkedIn help, but for me it's an attitude which is about being interested in people and organisations. With strong networks, opportunities present themselves.

I graduated into a recession, and it seems likely that that will be the same for the 2021 graduates. There may be fewer opportunities than you had expected, but then all the more reason to be flexible and follow what is out there rather than focusing on pursuing what you had had in mind before. Not everyone is comfortable with uncertainty, but as you get older you may regret not using the years immediately after graduating for taking bigger risks and seeing what the world has to offer.

Finding my way...

Carly Hilts graduated from St. John's College in 2009 with a BA and M.Phil in Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic.

For me, autumn is always an optimistic time of year - as the leaves begin to turn, I feel my spirits start to rise. It is a time of promising possibilities, of new plans and fresh starts - and I'm sure that's because I associate it with the start of the new academic year. It's hard to believe that it's been 15 years since I first arrived at University, excited and apprehensive in equal measure. I was the first from my comprehensive school to go to Cambridge in seven or eight years, and I wasn't sure what to expect - but before the end of that first term I knew I had found a place where, after a tricky time as the 'class boff' at school, I could figure out what else I wanted to be.

In that spirit, I threw myself into as much as I could (including a possibly over-ambitious attempt at rowing - as a 5ft-tall twig, I wasn't a natural boatie), and three groups proved particularly influential. The first was my coursemates and the wonderful staff of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, who made this shy state-school student feel immediately welcome as I found my feet. I had arrived with a love of languages and all things early medieval, but as the only one in my Latin class who hadn't studied the subject at least to GCSE, I initially wondered what I had signed up for - I will never forget how my kindly Director of Studies noticed that I wasn't speaking up much in translation class, and set me up with some extra one-to-one support until I caught up.

My fellow 'ASNaCs' remain lifelong friends - our 'zoom pub' sessions have provided a lot of much-needed laughs during lockdown - and my other most enduring friendships came via the University Gilbert and Sullivan society, which I only joined because you didn't have to audition for their freshers' show (did I mention I was shy?). This impulsive decision sparked a hobby that I continued after graduation, helping me to forge a new social life when I moved cities, and ultimately introducing me to my fiancé.

Finally, there was *The Cambridge Student* newspaper (TCS), on which I spent many happy terms, eventually co-editing it. The hectic camaraderie of the newsroom (caffeine-fueled races to meet the weekly deadline, triumphant midnight trips to the market square chip van once we had gone to press), combined with regular periods of work experience at my local paper during the holidays, left me in no doubt that I wanted to write for a living. It was also through TCS that I was introduced to my first employer, Masons News - a regional press agency that covers the east of England for the national papers.

Moving from weekly to daily news deadlines was something of a shock to the system (as was starting work at 7.30am!), but I was thrilled to be writing every day, and to have the chance to travel around the region to cover court cases and carry out 'door knocks' for journalists based in London. I dreamed of one day joining a London paper myself, but while many of the stories I covered were fascinating, I struggled to square the occasional calls to bother bereaved families with my conscience, and started to look elsewhere. I wanted to stay in the media and, ideally, use my degree, so among the people I wrote to were the producers of *Time Team*, a show that I had grown up with and adored. By happy chance they were just crewing up for series 18, and I joined the programme as a researcher.

At last, I was working in London! Not only that, but I was a commuter - initially reluctant to leave the friends that I was renting with in Cambridge, every morning I caught a hideously crowded train (usually sitting in the luggage rack, as the only available perch) to the capital, and then the tube to Shepherd's Bush. As train fares added up, though, eventually I made the leap and found myself a room in a west London house share. The house had mice and I didn't get on brilliantly with my fellow tenants, but it was a useful lesson in independence - and the work was wonderful. I helped to locate potential





Once again the timing gods were smiling on me – they were looking to recruit an editorial assistant, and took me on for two weeks' work experience to see what I could do. Nine years later, I'm still there – and for the last three, I've been editing the magazine. Yes, that means the buck now stops with me if we have blank pages, but I love the creative challenge of filling the magazine every month and (in non-COVID times) visiting as many excavations as I can. After weekly and daily deadlines, moving to a monthly felt pretty luxurious – though that's not to say that we don't know how to work fast. Our content is discovery-driven, which means that we sometimes have to tear up our page plan to accommodate an

excavation sites, visited archives and libraries to source the documents and images shown during each episode, and during filming I had to be on-hand to answer any questions the director might have. For this latter task, I was ever-grateful for the research skills that I had learned at Cambridge, as I was essentially expected to become an expert in a different historical period every two weeks. I even appeared on screen a couple of times, once in an end-of-episode 'cameo' reconstructing life in the Roman villa that the Team had excavated (yes, they really did do it all in three days), and once when the Assistant Producer and I carelessly wandered through the back of a shot.

As such a long-running show, *Time Team* was an incredibly close-knit community – on location, crew and 'stars' alike ate together, went to the pub together – and when operations were moved to Cardiff it was an incredibly hard decision to stay behind, but as the production team was only employed for seven months of the year, I was wary of moving away from work contacts. There followed an exciting (read: precarious) period of alternately finding myself 'between contracts' and freelancing on various projects, from helping to design the look of an ancient Egypt-themed computer game to joining the research-and-development team of the *Horrible Histories* TV series. Increasingly, though, I found myself missing writing – and being able to rely on paying my rent from month to month. After so many short contracts I wanted something a little more permanent, and so I wrote to *Current Archaeology* magazine.

exciting new find – such as when University of Leicester archaeologists (very considerably) announced that they had discovered the remains of Richard III just days before our print deadline in 2012. (That development also knocked a planned piece about Henry VIII's flagship, the *Mary Rose*, off the cover, a blow to the Tudors that I think Richard III might have appreciated.)

If I was able to revisit my fresher days and speak to a younger me, the main pieces of advice I would give are: say yes to as much as you can, as you never know which

Say yes to as much as you can, as you never know which hobby that you try on impulse will become a lifelong love, or will lead you down exciting new paths. And while it's a bit corny to say 'you make your own luck', I do believe that you can make your own opportunities

hobby that you try on impulse will become a lifelong love, or will lead you down exciting new paths. And while it's a bit corny to say 'you make your own luck', I do believe that you can make your own opportunities – never be shy about writing to companies you would like to work for, you never know when a vacancy might come up.

Finding my way...



Simon Burdus graduated from Girton College in 2007 with a degree in Geography and Management Studies.

Cambridge University is the best University in the world. The benefits of Cambridge outstrip other universities tenfold as not only does it provide you with a solid academic footing, but it provides a chance to become a well-rounded individual. This is especially true if you have taken advantage of the several clubs and societies available to you. These opportunities, I subsequently found, are offered at very few other universities.

As I was coming to the end of my time at Cambridge, I felt a lot of pressure to get a certain type of job (consultant, banker, lawyer) and to move to London. Initially, this path seemed like the natural progression for most Cambridge students who want to be 'successful'. The amount of graduate propaganda forced in your pigeonhole or Hermes mailbox can be almost overwhelming and I fell for it. I went for several job interviews, got my offers and was deciding whether to work for Accenture or the Boston Consultancy Group.

Luckily for me I decided to take a moment and evaluate my options. I was from a state school in the North East of England and London had never really been on my radar, I was going to take a job there as at the time I thought it was what was expected of me. Now I am not having a go at London, I love visiting - and some of my best friends there are having a wonderful time doing the jobs I previously listed, but remember these jobs are not for everyone.

The two most useful tools Cambridge afforded me with was the ability to critically analyse situations and to give me the confidence to know that I was going to be successful at whatever I chose to do. You don't get into Cambridge without having something about you. I critically analysed the situation and realised you do not have to follow this route. It was far more important to me to find something I loved doing that could financially support me.

I stayed in Cambridge after graduating, initially for a year, rather than diving straight into a career and worked with the student union. This provided me time to reflect on what my skills were and work out what I enjoyed doing. It soon became apparent to me that I did not particularly

enjoy having a boss (particularly an incompetent one) so for me the best decision was to run my own business doing something that I enjoyed.

It was then that I set up Big Fish Enterprises working with Fez, Cindies (Ballare) and Vinyl (Life). I was able to choose my own work schedule and had no one to answer to, I had the freedom to take the company in whichever direction I wanted and stay in a city I love; it was exhilarating. I may not have been earning what my friends were earning in London, but I was not spending two hours a day travelling, working for a boss I hated, in a city which is just too hectic for me.

After five years, I had got older, and trust me you cannot spend your life promoting nightclubs. You can only have so many fresher's weeks before you feel incredibly old. I sold up and moved back to Sunderland where I have proceeded to run several other businesses including a hotel, an environmental consultancy, and a mobile catering company. Have the confidence to find out what you enjoy and give it a go. Not everything works out, and as a Cambridge student you won't be used to failure, but don't fear it, embrace it.

The best advice I can give do not rush into a career. Do not be afraid to take some time really find out what you want to do. You have time to find your most suitable career path; it's a marathon not a sprint. Many people worry about starting their own businesses, but I can assure you that being a Cambridge graduate puts you in such a good position give it a go. I have benefited, not just what I learnt academically, but being JCR president gave me the opportunities to manage a team, taking part in productions boosted my confidence and the chance to meet likeminded people was a huge benefit. The Cambridge network is brilliant to be part of, and one which should never be taken for granted. I still work with people I met at University today.

I work hard, earn a good wage, and cannot recommend being your own boss more highly. Yes it's hard at the start when you don't have guaranteed income, but have the confidence to know that if you work hard enough you soon will, whilst hopefully living where you want, doing what you want with the people you want.

Finding my way...



Ellie Howcroft graduated from Magdalene College in 2018 with a degree in English.

I have no genuine pearls of wisdom about 'life beyond the Cambridge bubble' (alternatively known as, life) but I suppose if you're turning the pages of this Careers Guide and feeling any combination of confused, daunted or inadequate then the following observations can't do any harm.

Firstly, a point that's so obvious I am slightly embarrassed that it took me until now to realise it: there is no consensus on what counts as a good job. There really isn't. What some people consider to be prestigious and impressive professions, others will deride as unimaginative or soulless. My own job, journalism, which I consider to be one of the most interesting, moral and serious endeavours there is, has a terrible reputation, dragged down by tabloids and the commentariat. That's ok. You won't become the average of everyone who does your job: you'll do it your own way.

There are many factors you should take into account while planning your career, but what other people will think really shouldn't be one of them. Maybe you feel a desire to make your parents happy, or impress your friends, or simply have something that will look good on your gravestone or the blue plaque that will naturally be put up outside your childhood home. Ignore and suppress this desire at all costs! Instead, decide for yourself what you really value and hold on to that as tightly as you can in the face of family, friends, books, TV, social norms and adverts that will push and pull you this way and that.

On this note, I'd also advise scepticism when it comes to weighing up a company or industry. This is something to be particularly wary of when reading a careers guide. An advert is just that. It's up to you to do your own research and avoid getting drawn in by superficial perks and

big recruitment budgets. If you're considering going into finance or consultancy, I'd really recommend the essay *Even Artichokes Have Doubts* by Marina Keegan (it's

I can't overstate the extent to which it is up to you to decide where you go in life. Be the change you want to see in the world

available online) in which she documents the process by which her classmates at Yale gravitating towards the same jobs. It's a thin line between postponing your dreams for a few years and giving up on them all together.

Try and avoid people who talk about the well-trodden

path or the typical route. I can't overstate the extent to which it is up to you to decide where you go in life. Be the change you want to see in the world. Etc.

Before this article collapses into a list of (well-intentioned!) clichés, let me offer one final observation. When you leave primary school you start secondary school as a baby all over again, your cache of experience that made you the big kid before suddenly back at zero. So too when you leave secondary school and start university, or leave university and start out in a job.

Don't be fooled into thinking this time is like the previous times, and that, if you can just keep your head down for a few years, you'll soon be old and wise again. The biggest difference, I've found, between life in education and life beyond the Cambridge bubble is that progression is not inevitable, nor is it compulsory. No one is keeping a timetable but – here's the good part – you can get older and wiser on your own terms.



Finding my way...



Eleanor Dickinson graduated from Murray Edwards in 2012 with a degree in English.

There are three things for me that stick out from *The Cambridge Student* newspaper days: one was the endless supply of beer to get us through deadline day's night shift. The second was my-then co-deputy news editor, Michael Yoganyagam sending the PDFs off to the tune of the Lion King's 'The Circle of Life'.

The third was my tear-inducing ineptitude with InDesign, which is why it is now the great irony of my life that I somehow managed to bag a gig as a technology journalist in Australia.

No pun intended, but that end goal wasn't exactly by design. Like many budding journalists, I left University with the ambition of becoming your typical hard-nosed local sleuth for whom the large typefaces of the London mastheads were only a few years away.

However, after two years chugging around my old haunts for the *Cambridge News*, it wasn't the nationals that called, but a trade press magazine about the advertising industry in Dubai.

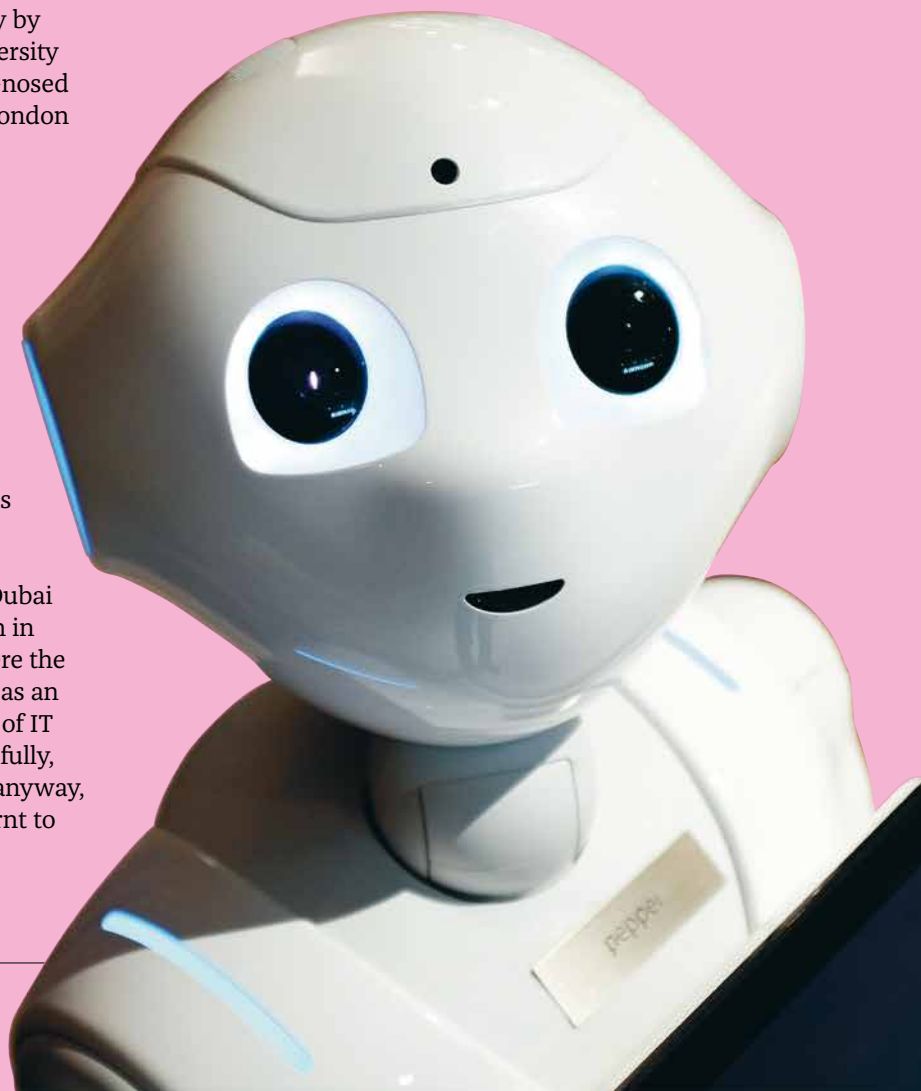
To the detractors who thought I was crazy to let my ambitions go for a random gig in the Middle East, I told them -- and myself -- it would just be for a couple of years; have an adventure, learn some new skills and come back with the nationals still lining up for me.

Five years have passed since then: 18 months in Dubai turned into a year editing a marketing publication in Singapore until fate finally led me to Sydney, where the only job I could get with a visa attached to it was as an IT journalist. And here I am now Associate Editor of IT industry trade title *Australian Reseller News*. Thankfully, as I discovered writing about technology, for me anyway, is much easier than using it. And I've actually learnt to enjoy writing about IT distribution networks and hybrid-cloud adoption.

I know many journalists who say, when asked what their advice is to prospective young reporters, avoid the industry like the plague.

I take a different approach. First I will say, it's not for everyone. It's terrible pay and it is unfortunately the heartbreaking case that media budgets and newsrooms are shrinking every year. But if you love having your brain constantly enriched by discovering new ideas, new people and, best of all, great scoops, then you will be rewarded.

In my case, my advice would be not limiting yourself to the idea that the ultimate goal is the nationals, because there are many more opportunities to be had. And if you get offered those opportunities, take them; try something new, gain a new experience. And if it doesn't work out, you haven't lost anything and you can always just go into PR.



Finding my way...

Charlotte Wilcox graduated from Magdalene College in 2013 with a degree in Natural Sciences.

When I graduated from Cambridge, I moved in full time with my boyfriend in Northern Ireland. Adjusting to life outside the bubble was strange at first; mostly a feeling of not quite knowing what to do with myself after the exhaustion of finals and the excitement of graduation. Job hunting began to help us get some savings behind us. I had a little admin experience before coming up to Cambridge, so until we got ourselves established I did some temping through recruitment agencies.

Once we had some money saved up, I was able to continue with my education. My academic interests lie in zoology and genetics. When I found a Master's course at Queen's University Belfast in Animal Behaviour and Welfare it seemed like a good fit. I was able to get a place on the course with a merit-based scholarship (which was ideal for half of a young couple just starting out living together) which helped to cover my tuition fees. I gained further valuable knowledge of my subject and research techniques.

Once I had graduated, I decided to take what I'd planned originally to be a year out of education. I began tutoring. I still tutor to this day, with my client base growing year on year. I tutor GCSE and A level students in Maths and Science subjects and to my delight, I am my own boss. I pick my own hours, set my own rates and decide how to run my business.

Running a business is hard work, but it does give me a lot of pride and self-worth. But the main reason I keep doing it is those 'eureka' moments.... Those moments where you can see on the students' faces where the penny has dropped or they've managed something they never thought they could. Exam results day where students who came on board when they were getting E's and U's get A and B grades. The sheer pride in themselves, and knowing that I've helped them to achieve

that, and made a real positive difference to these people's lives is why what I'd only intended to be a temp job has seemingly become a bit of an addictive career path.

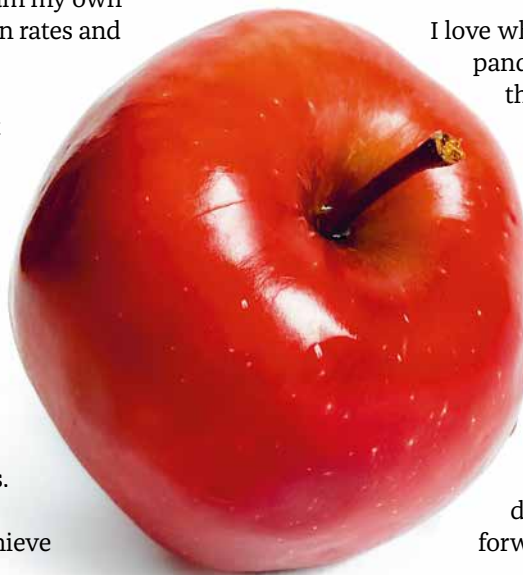
Since I was a teenager, my career 'goal' has always been to make a difference. At that age, I wasn't quite sure what that meant or where that would lead. In truth, I am not fully sure which path I will take. But the wonderful thing

**I am my own boss.
I pick my own hours,
set my own rates
and decide how to
run my business**

is that my education at Cambridge has enabled me to open many doors, which remain open, for me to walk through.

One of my favourite things about NatSci vs other degrees from alternative universities,

other than the prestige, etc., was the true breadth of options open to me. I had always intended to go back after that year post-Master's and to do a PhD; this is still on the cards for me as, to be honest, I'm a nerd who constantly wants to learn. I enjoyed my research, and I find a puzzle, a problem or a hypothesis hard to resist.



I love what I do now, and what with the pandemic, there is more call for tutors than ever at present. My students get good results, so I must be doing something right with them, and I enjoy our lessons. Longer term, I'm even thinking of going into teaching - something I NEVER considered before tutoring, but having seen how much I enjoy what I do, perhaps this is where I'm next destined.

Wherever I end up, whichever of the multiple options open to me I decide to take, I'm excited and look forward to seeing what the future holds.

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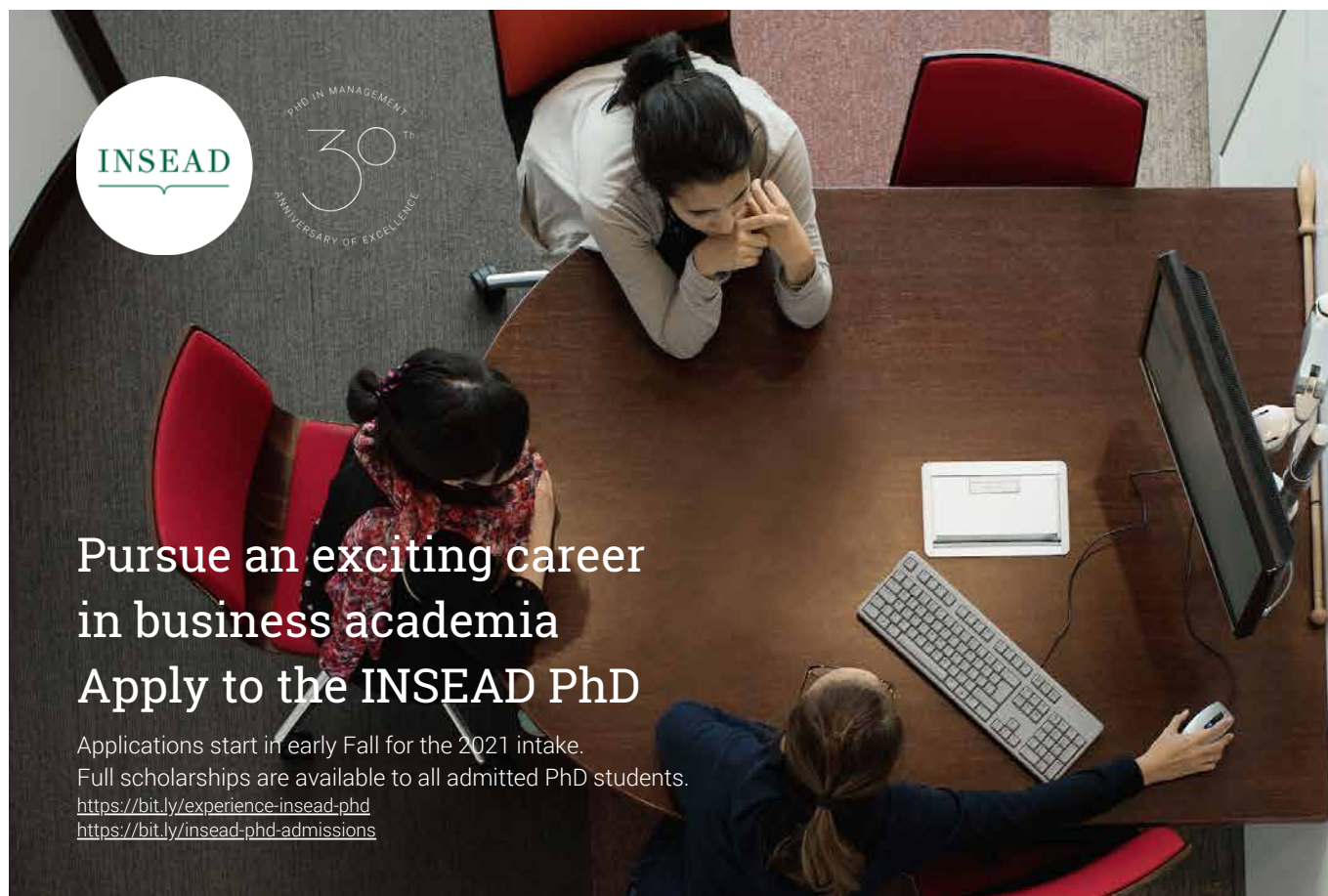
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