Taking Time Out

Each year, around 5% of Lancaster students take time out after graduation for a variety of reasons. By time out we mean the period immediately after graduation – anything from three months to a year or more.

Some of the most common reasons are to:

- Take a break from education.
- Travel.
- Gain work experience.
- Raise your cultural awareness.
- Think and make decisions about what to do career-wise.
- Get technical skills or professional qualifications.

Whatever the reason, a year out can be productive if you plan it well. It can develop, enhance and build your skills which can benefit your future employment prospects.

Plan:

Be aware of deadlines for jobs, graduate schemes or course applications that might take place during your time out. Research this before you leave and keep track of developments.

- **Find out when your target employers recruit** and plan to be around. Miss out even by a week and you could miss some employers for another year.
- **Use email alert facilities to search** and monitor relevant vacancies.
- **Check to see whether your target employers will require you to be in the UK during the recruitment ‘season’ for interviews.** If so, plan any overseas travel or work accordingly. Although you can apply online, most employers still do interviews face to face.

Do something:

If you're taking time out because you've no idea what to do, that's fine. But do something careers related during the time period. Talk to people. Try things out. Keep a record of your skills, responsibilities and achievements – it might be difficult to remember significant details further down the line. Make a list of the contacts you make and keep evidence of the positive feedback you receive. Book an appointment with a careers consultant and discuss future job ideas.

How do employers view time out?

Most view time-out favourably as long as you can demonstrate that you are a better candidate as a result of your time out than you would have been before it. Taking time to fulfil an ambition, learn a new skill or achieving another goal you set yourself are fine. A period of time sitting around doing nothing won’t be viewed as positively!
Employers will want you to be able to talk about your skills and experiences. Be ready to answer questions such as:

- What were your reasons for taking time out?
- How did you plan the time available?
- What did you get out of the experience?
- How have you developed as a person?
- How did you overcome challenges?

If you graduated in a technical or scientific subject, employers may be concerned that your degree content could soon become out of date. Do some research about how long your knowledge will be considered current as part of your thinking about possible time out.

**How we can help you:**

**Before you go:**

- Book a Careers appointment if you need to discuss your options in more detail, plan how to achieve your objectives and make the most of the opportunity.

**During and after your time out:**

- Even after graduation you can use Careers indefinitely. You can attend any of our events and recruitment fairs, get help with job or course applications or you may want to review your time out and discuss how it is meeting your objectives. If you are outside the region/UK, you can contact us through TARGETconnect or we can arrange a chat via Skype.
- Reply to our Destinations of Leavers survey. We do a follow-up of all of Lancaster graduates six months after graduation. Even though you may be travelling we’re keen to know what you are doing.

**You can also:**

- Consult the gap year section of the Prospects.ac.uk website as it provides ideas, tips and case studies related to taking time out after graduation.
- Check out the gap year foreign travel advice section on the Foreign & Commonwealth Office website to ensure your gap year is the best and safest it can be.

**Whatever you plan to do with your time out, have a great time and make the most of it!**

**Get in touch:**

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