

# Options with pharmacy

## Your skills

Over the course of your degree you develop a good mix of subject specific and technical skills as well as transferable core skills. Consider these alongside other achievements, such as paid work, volunteering, family responsibilities, sport, membership of societies, leadership roles, etc. Think about how these can be used as evidence of your skills and personal attributes. Then you can start to market and sell who you really are, identify what you may be lacking and consider how to improve your profile.

Apart from the knowledge and expertise which are needed to practise as a pharmacist, your degree will also provide you with a broad range of transferable skills which are highly regarded by employers across a variety of sectors. These skills include: researching; information/data handling, evaluation and interpretation; the ability to solve problems in an analytical and logical way; numeracy; written and oral communication skills; IT; project management; decision making; and teamworking. Employers will also value your ability to work accurately, systematically, and efficiently.

Any skills, knowledge and experience that you've acquired through doing work experience and extracurricular activities will enhance your employability. You may have also gained other skills, both technical and interpersonal, depending upon the type of work that was undertaken. Having some work experience in the form of a part-time job, voluntary, summer or industrial placement is a good way to demonstrate to employers that you have initiative and can apply the skills learned in your course to the work place. It will also help to show that you're motivated, hard working and reliable. Extracurricular activities such as taking part in sporting activities or university societies can again demonstrate that you can work in a team and have good communication and social skills.

## Employment prospects

Every year, statistics are collected to show what HE students do immediately after graduation. These can be a useful guide but, in reality, with the data being collected within just six months of graduation, many graduates are travelling, waiting to start a course, paying off debts, getting work experience or still deciding what they want to do. For further information about some of the areas of employment commonly entered by graduates of any degree discipline, check out 'What Do Graduates Do?' and the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Your Degree... What Next?'

Most pharmacy graduates will go on to work as a [hospital pharmacist](#) or [community/retail pharmacist](#). Pharmacy graduates have a wide range of transferable skills and can enter careers in scientific research; technical support; analysis and investigation; patent work; health care; scientific writing and journalism; management; management consultancy and accountancy.

After graduation, the majority of pharmacy graduations will study the pre-registration pharmacy course. Most pharmacy graduates will immediately undertake some full or part-time work before the programme begins.

## Job options

Bear in mind that it's not just your degree discipline that determines your options. Get hold of the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Your Degree... What Next?' from your careers service. This looks more generally at the options for today's graduates and offers informed advice on career planning. Or try 'What jobs would suit me?', an online career planning tool, at [www.prospects.ac.uk/links/ppanner](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/ppanner).

You can choose between jobs that are degree-related or those that appeal because they use other interests or elements of your degree.

### Jobs directly related to your degree

- [Community/retail pharmacist](#) - dispenses prescription medicines to the public, supervises preparation of some medicines, sells over-the-counter medicines, and advises the public on the treatment of minor ailments.
- [Hospital pharmacist](#) - responsible for dispensing and distributing medicines for hospital in-patients and out-patients. Liaises with other health-care professionals to contribute to treatment decisions and monitor progress of drug therapy.
- [Clinical research associate](#) - sets up, monitors and completes clinical trials. A clinical trial is a scientific study of the effects, risks, efficacy and benefits of a medicinal product.
- [Research scientist \(life science\)](#) - designs, plans and investigates experiments and fieldwork in order to extend and apply knowledge of biological and natural phenomena.

### Jobs where your degree would be useful

- [Scientific journalist](#) - researches, writes and edits scientific news articles and features.
- [Scientist, industrial research](#) - plans, organises and carries out systematic investigations into the properties of materials and the performance of components in order to develop new, or to improve existing products.
- [Chartered certified accountant](#) - works within private practice, industry, commerce and the public sector, providing accountancy services. They offer a range of services to an internationally recognised standard, including taxation, insolvency and corporate finance.
- [Production manager](#) - plans, co-ordinates and controls industrial processes.
- [Quality assurance manager](#) - sometimes referred to as quality control, QA is a part of quality management which focuses on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled in the manufacturing, engineering and service industry sector.
- [Regulatory affairs officer](#) - ensures the appropriate licensing, marketing and legal compliance of pharmaceutical and medical products.
- [Higher education lecturer](#) - facilitates learning and carries out research activities in universities and some colleges of further education. They teach academic or vocational subjects to undergraduate and postgraduate students from age 18 upwards.

Recruiters for senior roles in advertising, finance, sales and marketing will usually require applicants who have several years of work experience and possibly specialist qualifications.

Although for many graduates the jobs listed here might not be their first, they are among the many realistic possibilities with your degree, provided you can demonstrate you have the

attributes employers are looking for. It's worth noting that many graduate vacancies don't specify particular degree disciplines.

To find out more about the above options and other jobs, see AGCAS Occupational Profiles and other sources of occupational information available in careers services. Occupational Profiles are also available on [www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations).

## Where are the jobs?

Most pharmacy graduates are employed as pharmacists in hospitals, retail chains or independent chemists to work in the community in retail stores. The vast majority of hospital pharmacists are employed by The National Health Service (NHS) (<http://www.nhs.uk>). A small proportion are employed by private hospitals and clinics. A small percentage of pharmacists are employed by the NHS or private sector organisations to work as pharmacists in care homes for older people or adults and children with mental health, learning, or physical disabilities. Pharmaceutical and food and drink companies also employ many pharmacy graduates to work in a range of roles within research and development (R&D), quality assurance, advertising, marketing, sales and management.

For further information take a look at the following sectors:

- [Health](#);
- [Local, regional and national government](#);
- [Science](#).

Career management is an ongoing process, one that you'll no doubt develop all your working life. For further information on all the above employment areas, visit [www.prospects.ac.uk/links/sectorbs](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/sectorbs) or ask to see the AGCAS Sector Briefings at your careers service.

## Further study

A very small percentage of pharmacy graduates opt immediately for postgraduate study. This is largely because a pre-entry postgraduate qualification is not needed to practise as a pharmacist, and is rarely advantageous when applying for jobs within the profession.

Pharmacy graduates who want a career in scientific research and development may choose to study for an MSc or PhD in fields such as bio or chemical science. Graduates who want to go into non-degree-related professions such as management consultancy or marketing may decide to increase their knowledge and broaden their skills through doing relevant postgraduate courses. The most commonly studied subjects include management, business administration, HR, marketing and advertising.

These trends show only what previous graduates in your subject did immediately upon graduating. Over the course of their career - the first few years in particular - many others will opt for some form of further study, either part-time or full-time. If further study interests you, start by taking a look at the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Postgraduate Study and Research' or the 'Further study' section of [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk). For a comprehensive list of courses, see 'Prospects Postgraduate Directory'.

Refer too to the 'Prospects Postgraduate Funding Guide', the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Postgraduate Study and Research' and AGCAS Vocational Course Surveys for further details relating to finance and the application process.

## Other options

Don't forget there are alternatives to entering employment or postgraduate study, such as taking time out, volunteering or travelling. Longer term, you may want to consider starting your own business. Check out the AGCAS Special Interest booklets 'Beyond Nine to Five: Flexible Working', 'Self-employment' and 'Working Abroad', all available from your careers service.

## What next?

This should have started you thinking about your future. Whatever stage you are at, your careers service will be able to help you. A huge number of resources, including most of those mentioned here, plus a wide range of other services, including individual careers guidance, employer presentations and workshops on topics such as successful applications and interview techniques, are likely to be on offer.

A full list of useful resources plus case studies of graduates in this subject can also be found on [www.prospects.ac.uk/links/options](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/options).

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