Lifelong Learning Centre

BECOMING A GRADUATE

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
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Important information
Information provided by the University, such as in presentations, University brochures and on the University website, is accurate at the time of first disclosure. However, courses, University services and content of publications remain subject to change. Changes may be necessary to comply with the requirements of accrediting bodies or to keep courses contemporary through updating practices or areas of study. Circumstances may arise outside the reasonable control of the University, leading to required changes. Such circumstances include industrial action, unexpected student numbers, significant staff illness (where a course is reliant upon a person’s expertise), unexpected lack of funding, severe weather, fire, civil disorder, political unrest, government restrictions and serious concern with regard to the transmission of serious illness making a course unsafe to deliver. After a student has taken up a place with the University, the University will look to give early notification of any changes and try to minimise their impact, offering suitable alternative arrangements or forms of compensation where it believes there is a fair case to do so. Offers of a place to study at the University will provide up-to-date information on courses. The latest key information on courses, entry requirements and fees can be found at www.leeds.ac.uk/courses. Please check this website before making any decisions.
As you become a graduate of the University of Leeds there is one word which all of us here in the Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) want to say loud and clear: congratulations! Only you know the journey that you have made to reach this point – the challenges as well as the triumphs. Now is time to take in the view from the top of the mountain that you have climbed and allow yourself to feel a sense of well-deserved pride in your achievement. We hope that others can share in this celebration too, especially those who have supported and urged you along the way - your friends, family as well as LLC students and staff.

Our goal in the LLC is to provide opportunities for people to change for life, helping you gain knowledge, skills and above all a confidence in your own capabilities to carry into the future. This guide is designed to help you to make the most of these things and carry on your journey of learning and self-development beyond your time as a formal student.

In all of this, we wish you every success. Not that this is a “farewell” – you will always be a part of the University of Leeds and the LLC is here for you in whatever way we can help. We hope that you will want to keep in touch by telling us how you are getting along and, maybe, supporting others to follow in the journey that you have taken.

Anthony Ellis
Director of the Lifelong Learning Centre
About this Guide

Written with input from current students and recent graduates, known as ‘alumni’, the aim of this guide is to support your transition from undergraduate study into your new life as University of Leeds Alumni! As well as giving practical advice, hints and tips, the guide should also be used as a reflective tool to encourage you to think about what being a ‘graduate’ really means. Consider the unique skills and attributes that you now have in your toolkit, to help think through your ‘next steps’ as well as developing a plan for the next few months and beyond as you start this exciting new chapter of your life.
What Does a Graduate Look Like?

As part of the Lifelong Learning Centre’s Becoming a Graduate workshop programme, which runs alongside this guide and helps students to think about their personal motivations, values and skills, we ask participants not only to answer the question ‘what does a graduate look like?’ but to draw what they think a graduate looks like. Think about it yourself for a moment. If you were to draw a ‘graduate’ on a sheet of A4 paper, what would you draw?

Some people have taken the question literally by drawing a picture of a smiling person holding a degree certificate, wearing a flowing gown and mortar board. Others have drawn a person walking on a long road that suddenly splits off into many possible directions, a person on top of the world, a door open to all possibilities, key phrases such as ‘empowerment’ and ‘role model’…

The point of the exercise is always the same; to get participants thinking about the differences between themselves and someone that may not have been to University. For example, how does being a graduate change you as a person? What are you able to do now that you may not have been able to do before? What knowledge and skills have you gained during your time as a student?

Skills, Knowledge and Attributes

Considering yourself as a graduate requires you to think about the skills, knowledge and attributes that you’ve gained during your time at University. Some of those may be subject specific skills, perhaps characteristics that you have developed naturally over time or those all-important transferable skills that will hold you in good stead whatever you choose to do in the future. Take a look at some of the examples below. Which ones apply to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILLS</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>ATTRIBUTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Information and abilities acquired through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject.</strong></td>
<td><strong>A quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spoken and written communication</td>
<td>• Languages</td>
<td>• Self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accuracy</td>
<td>• Technical experience/skills</td>
<td>• Self-sufficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• IT literacy</td>
<td>• Vocation-specific experience/information</td>
<td>• Self-belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Numeracy</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-motivation / proactivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work / commercial awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dedication / drive / commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thinking skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Integrity / honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflection</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Adaptability / flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Planning / organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decision-making</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Willingness to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Problem-solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enterprise: creativity, innovation, initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Critical thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reasoning and logic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Linking theory and practice</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What other Skills, Knowledge and Attributes do you have as a result of your time at University?
**Motivations and Values**

Before being able to effectively consider your next steps, whether it be further study, finding your dream job or spending some catching up with loved ones, you will need to think through your motivations and values (also known as 'what gets you out of bed in the morning!'). Take a look at some of the examples below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helping People</th>
<th>Helping others, perhaps in a caring role, pastoral support role, advising, offering guidance, working with young people or those with additional support needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Having a good work / life balance, being able to spend time with family, not having unsociable work shifts, being an example to family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Improving the quality of your lifestyle, a new car or a holiday in the sun, not having to struggle financially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Working your way up a 'career ladder', being influential, a leader, gaining recognition and credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>Feeling like you have done something worthwhile and of value, increased self-worth, satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging Yourself</td>
<td>Pushing yourself, having aspirational goals, stepping out of your comfort zone, learning new skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Doing something that you believe in, being driven by core values and beliefs, or being personally invested in something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Are there other motivations / values that are important to you?*
I did not want to leave University. I wanted to do more courses as I was terrified of change and I convinced myself I was going to stay in University education forever. I became a different person at University. I never knew who I truly was until the thought of who I was, was challenged. Everything I thought I knew had changed, and I learned that not everything was as it seemed, sometimes asking that nagging question in the back of your mind which sounded stupid or silly actually helped to fit all the pieces together. I did not know what was next for me, but I knew I wanted to do something to give back to others. The feelings leading up to leaving were: am I ready? Did I learn enough? Am I going to make it in the big world? Will the University still support me if I crash or get stuck? And the answer to all of those thoughts was yes. University taught me loads and made me ready for the big world and never once said I would have to do it alone, they gave me my life back.

I had my interview for my teacher training course before graduating and I was accepted. I had lots of anxiety and fear as not only was the University mine and my son's life for the past three years, we lived there too. I was terrified of leaving the University and was contemplating doing a masters just so we could stay. It would not have been the right thing for me and my son though. After talking with the Masters Guidance Advisers, tutors and other LLC staff I was made to feel more comfortable with the choices I made about going onto my teaching degree. Submitting the last bit of University work, was horrible and made me feel a little depressed, but once graduation day came I was overwhelmed with emotion on how far I had come and appreciation for everyone who was involved in getting me to that point.

The University helped me to learn the skills I learned but University helped me to be able to organise and structure my work. I did contemplate from July until September whether or not to do a Masters, continuing on in my area of studies relating to sociology or social policy but I felt ready to take a risk and move on. I have been doing the FE Direct teacher training course for Special Educational Needs since leaving University. I go to college Monday night and all day Fridays. I have two days placement work - one day I work with students who have multiple disabilities and one day I work with students who have mild disabilities. I teach life skills and healthy living to enable the students to live their lives as independently as possible. I am also doing online GCSE English. The work load is unbelievable with: pre class work, assignments, lesson planning, schemes of work, resource making, individual learning plans, observations, placement hours, and GCSE coursework. However, I really enjoy being in the classroom and having the skills to help each student. It feels really natural to me.

The University helped me to acknowledge the skills I had and let me recognise my strengths and weaknesses. This helped me to decide what I wanted to do after I graduated. The Discovery Modules I did in Learning and Teaching are similar to those I am doing now so I feel confident with my coursework and I am able to help support my peers. The University helped me to continually reflect on my life and practices and now it has become a natural process I do in my daily living. The skills I learned on the Contemporary and Professional Studies degree enable me to be in control of many aspects of my life, knowing how to write a CV, write a reflective journal, find business opportunities, know what my rights are in the workplace and as a citizen, know how to treat people and appreciate differences, and to top it all off I gained so much confidence and belief in myself.
“I had my interview for my teacher training course before graduating and I was accepted. I had lots of anxiety and fear as not only was the University mine and my son’s life for the past three years, we lived there too. I was terrified of leaving the University and was contemplating doing a masters just so we could stay. It would not have been the right thing for me and my son though. After talking with the Guidance Advisors, Tutors and other LLC staff I was made to feel more comfortable with the choices I made about going onto my teaching degree.”

Crystal Reece – BA (Hons) Contemporary and Professional Studies, 2017
What Next? Practical Next Steps

YOUR UNIVERSITY IT ACCOUNT
Your IT account (email, wireless, library, Minerva, Office 365 access and more) will stop working 60 days after the last date of your course - this is usually the completion date shown on your student card. Prepare for losing your email and VLE accounts by saving anything you need and letting people know about your change of email address. Provide the Lifelong Learning Centre with your personal email address for future contact by emailing llcalumni@leeds.ac.uk. Create a graduate account for MyCareer (see What Next: Careers section of this guide). You will still be able to access Leeds for Life using your existing username and password (see page 24).

PRINT CREDIT REFUNDS
MyPrint credit balances over £3.50 can be refunded. The University does not refund MyPrint credit balances under £3.50, but it can transfer your MyPrint credit to a friend you nominate. If you bought your MyPrint credits with cash, you’ll be refunded in cash. Likewise MyPrint credits purchased using a debit or credit card can only be refunded back to the original payment card. Please visit the IT Service Desk for refunds.

STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENTS
Now that you have graduated you will need to start paying back any Tuition Fee Loans and Maintenance Loans that you may have taken out to fund your studies, but not other student finance, for example grants and bursaries. The earliest you start repaying is when your annual income is over £25,725 and it’s either;
- the April after you leave your course, if you studied full-time
- or
- the April four years after the course started, if you studied part-time

Your repayments will be taken out of your salary at the same time as tax and National Insurance if you are an employee. If you’re self-employed, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will work out how much you pay from your tax return. You will stop paying if your income drops below £25,725.

There is more detailed information on the Student Loans Company Repayment website1.

MONEY
If you are not moving straight into work following graduation then you may need to think about engaging with the benefits system while you think through your options and next steps or wait to hear back from any ‘irons in the fire’.

Previous graduates have told us that they felt uncomfortable accessing state benefits - “I didn’t go to University and borrow all of that money to just go onto benefits”. For some, however, it can be a valuable and needed stepping stone from student loans to paid employment. Your local Welfare Rights Unit (in Leeds) or Citizens Advice office should be able to give you information about any benefits that you may be entitled to receive.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT
Have you been accessing additional support for any long term medical conditions while you have been at University – perhaps student counselling or mentoring support for mental health conditions? Start thinking about whether you will need to find alternative sources of support from your GP or other health practitioners.

1 www.studentloanrepayment.co.uk
What Next? Careers

You may already know what you want to do next and/or be in the process of applying for opportunities. If so, don’t forget the University Careers Centre and the LLC can continue to support you with checking applications and preparing you for interviews and other selection activities. You can also continue to book group activities at the University such as employer presentations, workshops and careers fairs. Take a look at the Class of 2019 information on the Careers Centre website for some inspiration.

Alternatively, you may have been focusing on your final year academic work and not yet have been thinking about your future career. Don’t worry, it’s fine to start looking at this now. Here are a few suggestions for ways forward:

- **Don’t know what you want to do?** Book a guidance interview, either at the University Careers Centre, or at the LLC. Guidance can help you to explore your interests, values, motivations and strengths with a view to identifying possible career paths. You could also look at Career Planner and/or Job Match on the graduate careers website Prospects.

- **Need to get some ideas about what graduate roles are available?** Try the job profiles or the job sectors pages on the Prospects website. It can give you ideas about careers you perhaps hadn’t considered, or even been aware of. TargetJobs provides similar information.

- **CV a bit rusty (or non-existent)?** Check out information on CVs on the University Careers Centre website or look at some of the books in the LLC student resource area. For one-to-one support there is a drop-in at the Careers Centre every weekday afternoon during term time, or you can book an appointment at the LLC.

- **Looking for vacancies?** The University Careers Centre facility MyCareer has a vacancies section; you can sign up to be alerted as new ones are added. You can also find a list of graduate job websites on the LLC Alumni webpage.

- **Need to put a toe in the water first to check if a role or sector is for you?** In the autumn, the University Careers Centre advertises graduate Internships – short (paid) work placements with graduate employers. Good for testing out your interest in an area, providing an extra section on your CV and an additional referee for future applications. These are advertised via MyCareer, again you can sign up to receive alerts.

- **Thinking about self-employment?** The University Careers Centre has a team, Spark, which provides support for students and graduates interested in setting up their own business.
What Next? Further Study

For some roles, further study may be useful or even essential. For example, if you want to be a teacher, social worker, healthcare professional (e.g. nurse, physiotherapist), lawyer/solicitor, librarian/information technologist, psychologist, guidance worker or journalist it is likely that you will need to get additional qualifications. Check out Prospects\(^2\) for more information about professional qualifications for the roles which interest you, or book an appointment with a careers adviser, either at the University Careers Centre\(^2\) or the LLC\(^3\).

However, if you’ve been bitten by the academic bug, you might like to do postgraduate study anyway, perhaps specialising further in a particular subject or developing and broadening your interest in a related area. Postgraduate study is open to anyone, so if you’re interested, why not explore this option? The LLC doesn’t offer postgraduate courses but there are plenty of opportunities in the University\(^13\) and locally at other universities. Applications are often still accepted during the summer for an autumn start. Check out University websites and/or pick up the University of Leeds prospectus from the Student Services Centre in the Ziff Building. Most postgraduate courses are a year full-time or two years part-time (many offer a part-time option).

A couple of notes of caution: firstly, you normally need a First or a 2:1 to do a postgraduate course (but not always, check with the individual department). Secondly, the funding system is quite different from the undergraduate one; make sure you get advice about this before deciding to take up postgraduate study.

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\(^{2}\) www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk

\(^{3}\) www.llc.leeds.ac.uk/students/personal-and-professional-development/careers-support

\(^{12}\) www.prospects.ac.uk

\(^{13}\) www.leeds.ac.uk/info/101000/masters_courses
‘Gap years’ are normally associated with young people taking time out between school and University. Increasingly, graduates (of all ages) are taking a break after the stresses of the final year and spending some time reflecting on what they have learnt and where they want to go next (see Amanda’s experience in this guide). What could you do if you do not immediately plunge into a graduate career or a postgraduate course? Take some time to reflect and think about next steps; see the section ‘Your Strategy’ later in this guide.

• Do some research about possible careers and get your CV up-to-date (see What Next? Careers section for the support available for this)

• Find a job, if you need one to pay the bills. And even if you don’t, it’s useful to gain further experiences and enhance your CV (any work develops your transferable skills). Leeds University Union’s Joblink service welcomes you:

  Joblink is an on campus jobshop that can help you look for work during your studies as well as after they end. You don’t have to be a current student to come and work with us. Joblink can be used by recent graduates, external students and people who are taking a year out. We have various roles, some of them casual or ad-hoc, some that are part time and ongoing, as well as temporary full time roles, many of which are based on campus. These provide the perfect platform for work if you are not too sure what the next step is after your degree or you are looking for something locally. We have quite a lot of temporary full-time and part-time work that isn’t really suitable for current full time students and so we rely on graduates, gap year and external students for those particular roles. If you are not too sure about your next steps, just pop in and see us for a chat. Joblink is located in the lower level of Leeds University Union, in Market Square. Opening hours are Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm.

• Consider volunteering; it can keep you busy, expand your networks and develop your skills and knowledge. Locally, have a look at DoingGoodLeeds. The Do-It website offers opportunities nationwide (search by postcode and/or area of interest)

• Keep learning! Think about doing short courses/workshops/training events to build your skills set (if you’re not earning, some courses are free). Consider improving your IT skills or learning a language; all good for your CV. Try your local community learning venues, the WEA, Swarthmore (adult learning centre near the University) or FE colleges such as Leeds City College.

• From the autumn after you graduate, start looking at graduate career opportunities starting in the following September. Graduate trainee schemes start recruiting for their September intake from the previous autumn onwards and will usually consider applications from people who have graduated within the last 5 years, so you are not required to be a current student to apply. If there is a scheme to which you would like to apply but it is not yet open for applications, sign up to be notified as soon as recruitment starts. Graduate scheme vacancies are also advertised on MyCareer.
Case Study: Simon West
BA (Hons) Business Management, 2017

The greatest sense of accomplishment I had was when I submitted my dissertation as that really was the most time consuming and rewarding project I have ever encountered. With only a couple of months to go, I felt a sense of time-consuming pressure but a feeling of not wanting to make any mistakes with my remaining work as I was so close to achieving the degree result I wanted. I also remember contemplating time I had spent on the course. Due to workload, I actually had to split my last year of the Diploma over two years which meant, in total, the full course took me 6 years. So there was a lot to reflect on. The saying “the weeks are long but the years are short” was never more apparent than when thinking about everything that I had encountered.

The best feeling was when I received my results and the graduation was a fantastic experience both for myself and my family. Soon afterwards I found it hard to adjust to the amount of spare time I now had and it felt strange not to have my nose in a text book or be in one of the University libraries.

One thing I didn’t appreciate was my official graduation photo, as I still think of myself as a 12 stone Adonis with a full head of hair. I take comfort in the fact that the camera adds 15lbs but to quote Chandler in Friends “How many cameras did you have on you?” Quite a few it seems!!

At work they have been supportive to my goals and I have progressed with two promotions of this last year. Although, they were impressed by the degree mark I achieved they show more admiration that I was able to attain this while working full time and balancing family life. I think this is very important as in any type of interview, you can always talk about whatever degree grade you achieved as in reality there’s little difference in a first and 2:1 etc. but there’s a lot to be said for the commitment, drive and self-sacrifice needed to even pass the degree and if that is also complemented by achieving the three year DipHE beforehand then that right there is a fantastic achievement.

There are still times in my life when I feel overawed at work but the knowledge that I had the application to achieve my degree sometimes serves as an anchor that I am capable of much more than I imagined. Lastly, my degree shows what a fantastic family I have around me who have let me follow my dreams and helped in every way possible. No person is self-made as I know only too well.
“The best feeling was when I received my results and the graduation was a fantastic experience both for myself and my family. Soon afterwards I found it hard to adjust to the amount of spare time I now had and it felt strange not to have my nose in a text book or be in one of the University libraries.”

*Simon West – BA (Hons) Business Management, 2017*
Different people will respond in different ways to the experience of graduating and not being a student at the University any more. We ran focus groups with students who have graduated and they described a sense of loss when they found themselves without the structure of studying and away from the community of friends, peers and tutors that had been part of their life.

So be prepared for a wobble (Crystal and Amanda both talk about this in their case studies). You might feel ‘isolation’ or that you are ‘left alone’, that you have been ‘institutionalised’ and you are now ‘grieving’, just as the students in our focus groups did.

A lot of stuff written about gaining a degree focuses on gaining employment in graduate roles, but it is often difficult to move into graduate work straight after graduating and there is a lot more to being a graduate than your job. Don’t forget all the things you have learned on your course, not just in terms of the subject, but the ways you can approach challenging situations, the resources you need and the people who can support you.

You need a strategy. If you have not got a strategy think about what has worked for you in the past in similar situations, especially how you tackled different elements of the degree by keeping motivated when things weren’t going well:

- finding helpful people to work with
- using the advice and guidance from tutors, other students or people at the University
- spending time with people that make you feel good about yourself
- having a laugh
- being active
- taking a break when you get stuck
- being kind to yourself
- using feedback and of course doing some research.

Your Strategy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>USEFUL FOR</th>
<th>RESOURCES NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflect</td>
<td>Unpicking emotions and ideas</td>
<td>Pen and paper or computer and keyboard</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenging initial assumptions</td>
<td>An open mind</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusting expectations</td>
<td>Some University skills websites are fully available online, for example Nottingham use Driscoll’s model&lt;sup&gt;22&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give</td>
<td>Improving self-esteem</td>
<td>Other people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tackling isolation</td>
<td>Listening skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shifting the focus away from yourself</td>
<td>A willing and helping attitude</td>
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<td>Networking</td>
<td>An awareness of other people’s needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Building a support group</td>
<td>An appreciation of the power of praise or positive reinforcement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>Sharing concerns</td>
<td>Other people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Making sense of a situation</td>
<td>A reasoned approach</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Letting people know something</td>
<td>An idea of the aim of talking and an awareness of the appropriate people to approach</td>
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<td>An open mind and a willingness to be challenged</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remove</td>
<td>Getting out of a situation that isn’t doing you any good or is making you feel negative - this could be short term (difficult conversation) or longer term (job you don’t enjoy)</td>
<td>An idea of possible alternatives – this might need some research</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Taking a break (a temporary removal)</td>
<td>A willingness to consider realistic alternatives – can you leave altogether or could you at least start planning to leave, by identifying what needs to be in place before you remove yourself completely?</td>
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<td>You might need to be prepared to compromise in order to remove yourself gradually</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laugh</td>
<td>Getting things in perspective</td>
<td>A willingness to let go of any tension/ negative feelings temporarily</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Releasing tension</td>
<td>A willingness to share enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Motivation and getting yourself going</td>
<td>Having some ideas about appropriate actions to take is useful, but it is not a good idea to wait for the perfect moment to act</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Just doing something can help to move you towards the goal, or to make you feel you are being constructive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Think</td>
<td>Making better decisions.</td>
<td>A willingness to challenge yourself to be careful in your reasoning to make better choices</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keeping interested in the world.</td>
<td>A desire to engage with the world</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Contributing to, and challenging, society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Keeping your brain active, continuing to learn and can be helpful in stimulating ideas</td>
<td>Books, articles, newspapers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can be a release or escape</td>
<td>A willingness to make time to read (however short)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Online reading lists or book clubs (online or local) might be interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Finding the most useful resources and identifying the important questions that you need to ask</td>
<td>Information resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Taking a systematic approach to a problem</td>
<td>Pen and paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying steps to take to reach a goal</td>
<td>Being prepared to make time to plan things out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breaking a process down into manageable steps</td>
<td>A willingness to consider alternative ways of moving forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An ability to think short, medium and long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some criteria to assess the appropriateness of the plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## WHO CAN HELP

You need to make space to reflect and be willing to look at the situation from different perspectives.

You can help yourself by giving compliments, acknowledging efforts or by offering help.

Any network eg neighbours, local groups, volunteering opportunities, University contacts, work contacts, family

Do you have opportunities to mentor someone?

The right people, for example:
- Friend
- Ex-colleague
- Mentor
- Family member

Other people involved OR people completely separate from the situation who can help with the decision making process (so this could be a colleague in a similar role, for example, or a mentor)

Friends or family or a programme, film, book, song or activity that makes you laugh or smile

You can be active on your own, but it can help to have other people involved. They can be part of the activity or they can be people you tell about something you have done. If you apply for a job, email the LLC to let us know. If you become a volunteer, send us a blog.

You have to think, but the quality of your thinking will come out in your relationships with others

Other people, to give ideas of things to read or share experiences of reading (join a book club, or set one up – locally or on-line), charity shops or book swaps can be useful ways of finding new things to read

Libraries, the internet, professional bodies, University contacts, organisational websites

Other people, to discuss options or evaluate proposals

Your future self, to look back and reflect

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Use the grid, left, to identify strategies that might be helpful for tackling different situations that can be frustrating once you have finished studying. Each strategy is described in a little more detail on the following page. You can combine these together to create a strategic approach to this new phase of your life.

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22 [www.nottingham.ac.uk/nmp/content/los/placs/critical_reflection/models/driscoll.html](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/nmp/content/los/placs/critical_reflection/models/driscoll.html)

23 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Atme26C0l5E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Atme26C0l5E)
STRATEGY DESCRIPTIONS

Reflect – you probably did some reflection and reflective activities during your course. The process of looking back to look forward can be useful to put things in perspective. Writing your reflections down is more effective than just thinking in your head. Structure your reflections using a model you have used before or research a new model.

Give – during your studies you would have shared anxieties and frustrations with other people and you will have supported other students, by discussing an issue or listening to concerns. You will also have been paid compliments and have given others positive feedback - remember how positive this feels, but also that networking is essentially looking for ways that you can help other people, for example could you offer to be a mentor for a local college or sixth form or for someone that you work with?

Talk – you will have spent time talking to tutors, support staff and other students at University and you know that you talk in different ways to different people. As a strategy, talking needs to be considered and appropriate. Do you need to just let off steam? (Talk to good friends and people who accept you for who you are). Do you need to clarify your thinking and engage in a dialogue, which will help you to do something? (Identify a useful person who can also challenge you - you might need to explain the purpose of the discussion and you might want to approach someone from your network to be your mentor or you could contact someone local or from the University about this).

Remove – you will sometimes need to walk away from a situation. This is not an easy thing to do, so you do sometimes need a strategy to actually use the 'Remove strategy'. For these preparation strategies could be Research, Talk, Think and Plan.

Laugh – being prepared to let go can be a choice we forget to make. Sometimes we ‘have to laugh’ because we can’t help ourselves, but we can also make ourselves smile, by turning up the corners of the mouth and laughing is seen as a form of therapy. Do remember to drink water and do not choke! Just enjoy.

Do – is the key to motivation. Taking action helps to get you going.

Think – you have developed yourself as a critical thinker, don’t let your skills go to waste.

Read – continue to be a critical and adventurous reader. Try different types of reading that you were not able to do whilst you were on your course. Explore your different tastes, fiction, non-fiction, biography or do you really want to carry on with some academic reading?

Research – your final year project honed your research skills, now you can apply these to different aspects of your life. Don’t forget to evaluate your sources and keep a record of your ideas.

Plan – you had to be really organized on your course. Simon’s case study earlier in this guide describes his employers as being really impressed by his ability to juggle the degree with the rest of his life. Don’t let this skill slide now that you do not have assignments to hand in. Writing plans down or talking about them with other people can be more helpful than planning in your head and you can talk about planning and organisation skills in interviews.
THE BIG NINE KEY POINTS:
1. Use the University resources that are still available to you
2. Engage with other people
3. Develop networks (these can be very local and personal and more formal)
4. Identify things you can do for other people
5. Carry on using your reading, researching and thinking skills where you can (informally and/or formally)
6. Make realistic plans and break them down
7. Be active
8. Look after yourself
9. Keep in touch
Case Study: Amanda Richardson
BA (Hons) Professional Studies, 2017

Initially I felt very apprehensive about fitting in my final year of study / dissertation as well as being a single parent and finding the time to look for a job. As with all aspects of University life it would take a balance to get right. I decided that I did not want to compromise on any of these aspects and so decided to not job search in my final year. This alleviated some of the stress and having made this decision I managed my money so that I had enough for a couple of months after I graduated from University.

After handing in my dissertation and final assignments the month or so after felt very strange. I hadn’t officially graduated but there was no more work to be done. There felt like there was residual stress but no way of expending it. After speaking to fellow classmates I realised this was common. We all found ways to relax and decompress.

As I had managed my money well I decided to take a little extra time out of work. I’ve spent more time with my daughter and enjoyed being a more involved parent including getting her settled at school life.

As I have yet to find work, all I know is that University and my degree will help improve whichever career path I choose to go into. On a more personal level, I did not share in the belief that my University experience was a phenomenally life changing event, compared to that of some of my peers. However, without the new networks support via staff and resources at the University of Leeds and individually with the Lifelong Learning Centre my development over the previous three years would not have been the same. My degree allowed me to find excitement and passion where there was none and realise the person I used to be before a tumultuous period in my life.
"Initially I felt very apprehensive about fitting in my final year of study / dissertation as well as being a single parent and finding the time to look for a job. As with all aspects of University life it would take a balance to get right. I decided that I did not want to compromise on any of these aspects and so decided to not job search in my final year. This alleviated some of the stress and having made this decision I managed my money so that I had enough for a couple of months after I graduated from University."

Amanda Richardson – BA Hons Professional Studies, 2017
What Can We Do For You?

Staff in the Lifelong Learning Centre have an unofficial motto – “Lifelong Learning for Life!” It captures our views about adult education generally but also represents how we feel about our students past and present. Once you have been part of the LLC ‘family’ – whether that has been for a Summer School programme, a Foundation Year which has led on to other programmes of study within the University or you have done a full six year stint on one of our part time degrees - then the door remains fully open to you as an LLC and University of Leeds graduate to access support, advice and guidance either now or at any point in the future.

Here are some examples of the support available to graduates both within the LLC as well as across the University:

**LLC GRADUATE NETWORK**
The LLC invites you to be part of its own ‘Graduate Network’ which has a range of benefits:

- Receive the LLC Graduate Network Newsletter three times a year
- An invitation to LLC Graduate Network events and other social activities
- Access to the LLC’s LinkedIn24 and Facebook25 Alumni groups – keep in touch with teaching staff and fellow alumni as well as other staff from the Lifelong Learning Centre
- Job and career related information, advice and guidance from the LLC Careers Education and Guidance Officer
- Academic skills support

To join the Graduate Network visit www.llc.leeds.ac.uk/about/alumni

**EVENTS**
In addition to the regular programme of public exhibitions, lectures, seminars, concerts and conferences offered by the University of Leeds, you may also be interested the LLC’s Seminar Series, an ongoing programme of free one-off events designed to increase knowledge and awareness of current research and thinking in areas relevant to the LLC’s portfolio. The seminars are aimed at students, alumni, staff, practitioners and anyone with an interest in the various subject areas.

**THE LEEDS NETWORK**
This is an online careers tool, accessed via Leeds for Life, where alumni have created short career profiles detailing what they have done since graduating from Leeds. There are just over 1000 profiles of alumni who are working in various sectors, industries and countries. Many of them are happy for you to make contact with them and ask questions. Through a simple search you will be able to find alumni who are working in the fields and countries that you are interested in finding out more about. Want to help future students in your position? Once you are settled into your new job or career, please do consider creating a Leeds Network alumni profile yourself. Your advice and guidance could really help another student or graduate.

**LEEDS FOR LIFE**
As a Leeds graduate you can access and update your Leeds for Life26 Living CV for 5 years after graduating, using your existing username and password:

- Use it to tailor your CV/application for that next important job
- Update it so your personal tutor can provide a better-informed reference

**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS LIBRARY**
You may access the Library’s world-class collection free of charge for reference only. For £50 per year, you may borrow Library items. Ask for a graduate application form at any library reception desk or find a link to it in the ‘Further information’ section of this guide.
What Can You Do For Us?

CAN YOU HELP THE NEXT GENERATION OF LLC GRADUATES?
The University and the LLC like to provide regular opportunities for current students to network with ex-students to discuss careers. In an informal setting, people discuss what our graduates are doing, how they got their job, what their job involves and other insights. It’s great for students to get a real feeling for what it is like out there in the workplace after University – you can only gather so much from reading websites! We’d like to run more events and activities like this; would you be interested in helping us by sharing your experiences? If so, please get in touch via llcalumni@leeds.ac.uk and hopefully we can arrange something in the near future.

GRADUATE OUTCOMES SURVEY
The Graduate Outcomes survey is a national survey capturing activities and perspectives of graduates 15 months after they finish their studies. All graduates who completed a course will be asked to take part in the survey, in order to help current and future students gain an insight into career destinations and development. We would be grateful if you could respond to this - it is a government requirement that we collect this information; we’re not just being nosy! Your responses will also help the University of Leeds and the Lifelong Learning Centre to evaluate and promote our courses. The survey is also of national significance as it allows policy makers, charities, journalists, researchers and others to understand the higher education sector and the state of the graduate labour market.
Further information

GENERAL
LLC Graduate webpage: www.llc.leeds.ac.uk/about/alumni
LLC Linkedin page: www.linkedin.com/groups/8427894
LLC Alumni Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/LLCAlumni
Use or join the Leeds Network: https://alumni.leeds.ac.uk/volunteering/leeds-network
Leeds for Life: https://leedsforlife.leeds.ac.uk
Apply to use the Library: https://alumni.leeds.ac.uk/document.doc?id=73

EVENTS
LLC Events: http://www.llc.leeds.ac.uk/public-engagement/llc-seminar-series
University of Leeds Events: https://www.leeds.ac.uk/events

FINANCE
Repaying your student loan: www.studentloanrepayment.co.uk
Find out about your eligibility for benefits: www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/council-tax-and-benefits/welfare-rights
www.citizensadvice.org.uk
www.turn2us.org.uk

CAREERS
University of Leeds Careers Centre: http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk
MyCareer: https://mycareer.leeds.ac.uk
Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk/planner
Target Jobs: https://targetjobs.co.uk
Spark: http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/info/15/starting_a_business.spark

FURTHER STUDY
www.leeds.ac.uk/info/101000/masters_courses

GAP YEAR
LUU Joblink: https://joblink.luu.org.uk/
Doing Good Leeds: https://doinggoodleeds.org.uk/i-want-to-volunteer
Do It: https://do-it.org
Leeds Adult Learning: https://leedsadultlearning.co.uk
WEA: www.wea.org.uk/yorkshumber
Swarthmore: www.swarthmore.org.uk
Leeds City College: www.leedscitycollege.ac.uk/courses-apprenticeships/adult-part-time-courses

DEVELOPING YOUR STRATEGY
University of Nottingham - Driscoll’s Reflective questions: www.nottingham.ac.uk/nmp/sonet/rios/placs/critical_reflection/models/driscoll.html
Mentoring: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Atme26C0I5E