Supporting Trinity College Students with Disabilities into Employment

Transition to Employment (T2E)

Click here to visit the T2E website

This booklet provides students with information on disability-related issues, such as communicating disability in the workplace and workplace accommodations, in addition to suggestions for career planning throughout their college career.

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Introduction

The Trinity College Dublin Disability Service aims to provide appropriate advice, support and information to students with disabilities, and in doing so has adopted a three phase approach to student support. The third phase concentrates on supporting students to become confident in negotiating disability related needs, and to successfully transition from College into employment, further study, or any other path they seek. The Disability Service objectives for Phase III are:

Progression — Identify a range of activities that assist disabled studentsprogress following their programme of study;

Completion — Provide assistance in the preparation for transition to further study or entry to employment;

Outcome — Monitor the outcome of the student journey as an evaluation of the service and College culture and ethos.

The Disability Service became a partner in the **EU Leonardo project 'Univers'Emploi'** in 2010. The aim of this project was that each partner country would create an employment support framework, which would embed employment elements into the needs assessment process. As part of this project, each partner institution conducted a pilot in which a group of final year students was supported through the process of transition, from College to employment, or further study.

Following on from involvement in this EU Leonardo project, the Disability Service is continuing to develop its services and supports for students, in preparation for transition to employment. The Disability Service provides personalised one-to-one sessions with final year students, together with email support in relation to employment issues. For more information about work in progress, please see the **Transition to Employment** webpages.

What are the concerns?

In 2012, the Disability Service conducted a survey with a group of final year students, to determine student concerns in relation to the transition to employment. Two primary factors that final year students identified as potential barriers to their chosen occupation were **disclosure of disability**, and **disability/attitudinal awareness**. In general, student respondents reported a lack of confidence regarding disclosure, during the application process, prior to or during the interview to Human Resources personnel, and to co-workers.

Using this booklet

This booklet is designed to address the common issues and concerns that have been raised by students with disabilities as they consider employment, including advice from graduates. It is never too early to begin planning your transition, and this booklet provides advice on career preparation for students, from the first year of college, to PhD level. We recommend a visit to the Trinity Careers Advisory Service website to explore their extensive resources, in particular **Careers' Service Plan your Career** for further details. The Careers Advisory Service offer workshops, CV clinics, and practice interviews. Click **here** to view their current events. You are also welcome to make an appointment to meet with your Careers Adviser.

This booklet contains some **activity checklists** that may be helpful to guide your thinking and actions, as you prepare for the transition to employment. It also has a list of resources and links at the back, which you may wish to explore. Final year students may find the Transition to Employment Self-Assessment (page 20) very useful in setting personal goals and actions to prepare for transition out of college. Please contact the Disability Service if you had a particular query in relation to **your transition** to employment, or if you have any feedback on our website materials.

Activity Checklist

Disclosure

Disclosure means informing your employer, or potential employer, of your disability. You will need to consider **whether** you wish to disclose your disability, and if you do, when, and **how**. All students should reflect on disclosing their disability within the work environment.

Should I disclose?

Disclosure is a personal, individual choice. You have no legal obligation to disclose your disability, unless you want to. You can disclose at any stage of the job application process. You can also disclose after you have started in a job.

Reasons you may want to disclose your disability:

- **Personal preference** – you feel your disability is an integral part of your identity;

- **To highlight skills, understanding, and attributes** – perhaps you were involved in advocacy work due to your disability. Maybe you have had to overcome significant obstacles compared to your peers, and have displayed determination, motivation or problem-solving skills in the process. With this in mind, you may wish to disclose to strengthen your job application;

- **To obtain supports or accommodations** – perhaps you will need specific software or an adapted workstation, or you may need to avoid heavy lifting or other tasks. You will need to disclose to obtain these accommodations;

- **Health and Safety** - perhaps you need to have someone who understands your medical condition in case of a medical emergency;

- **To secure time** off for illness / medical appointments.

Reasons you may not want to disclose your disability:

- You feel that your disability is unlikely to have an effect in a particular job, and you do not need supports / accommodations;

- You are uncertain about whether you would be stigmatised or receive differential treatment in the recruitment or application process, or within the work environment;

- You are unsure about how you will be treated by your employers and colleagues.

It is okay to decide not to disclose. However, it is still a good idea to prepare for disclosure in case you change your mind in the future (for example, if your personal circumstances or employment conditions / tasks change). When disclosing, preparation is the key. Know what you want to say, and ensure you get your message across clearly.

Disclosure should always include well-defined information about what accommodations / support you will need to perform to the best of your ability. Remember, it is illegal to discriminate due to a disability. See the **AHEAD Booklet on Disclosure**, a comprehensive resource, which introduces the relevant legislation and provides case examples.

When should I disclose?

You may wish to disclose:

Before an interview

Within an interview

Before starting work

Upon starting work

When an issue arises

Again, this is a personal choice and will depend on why you are disclosing. For example, if you need an accessible interview room, you will need to disclose this prior to the interview. If you require assistive technology to fulfill your job function, you may wait until after you have received an offer of employment, but before your first day on the job.

How should I disclose?

How much information should I disclose?

Again, this is a personal choice and will depend on why you are disclosing. You only need to disclose the details that are necessary for the purpose of receiving supports. You do not need to disclose your whole medical history. However, ensure you provide sufficient information to allow your employer to support you effectively.

When disclosing:

Do state clearly how your disability may impact your everyday work and any adjustments that may be required to complete your job effectively. Offer more than a medical term; this will not help your employer support you. **Do** highlight the skills and attributes you have developed whilst living with a disability. **Do** help allay any anxieties your new employer may have by describing how you have managed your disability in previous jobs, and within your study.

Who should I disclose to?

Again, this is a personal choice. You may wish to disclose to:

Your line manager   Colleagues   Human resources

Or all of the above

"The work place can be a great place to blossom and explain your disability."

TCD Graduate

Workplace needs

When you registered with the Disability Service you met a Disability Officer who carried out a needs assessment, to determine your support requirements. University, in many ways, is very like the workplace. You are asked to complete assignments with a deadline, and you are expected to participate in various activities that may include public speaking, team work, independent research, reading information etc. **By understanding your needs within your course, you can gain an understanding of what tasks you may encounter in the workplace and what will support you in performing these tasks.** Consider if and how your needs change during your time at university.

Activity Checklist

- [ ] List the supports you receive in College. Which are you likely to need in employment too?

- [ ] Consider whether any of the supports listed above will be difficult to provide in employment. If so, consider whether you can substitute this support for another that is easier to provide, and begin experimenting with the use of this support now. For example, if you have a note taker in lectures, consider trying assistive technology such as LiveScribe or a Dictaphone, which would give you more autonomy and choice in the workplace.

- [ ] List any aspects of your course that you find difficult to manage without support. Are likely to face similar challenges within employment? Consider what you can do now to prepare to face these challenges in the workplace.

- [ ] Speak to the Disability Service about what you can do now to prepare for your transition to employment.

FÁS – Allowances and Grants There are funds available to help your employer meet any reasonable accommodations you may need.

> **"See "challenges" as opportunities for you to develop alternate ways of doing things."**

TCD Graduates

> **"There is a lot of support in the workplace too."**

Using technologies within the workplace and placement

Assistive Technology is easy to use devices and programmes that allow you to perform tasks and activities that you might find difficult or hard to complete on your own. Assistive devices and software is getting technology to work for you the way you want it to making your day to day life easier, without the stress of missing out on important information or tasks.

Such technologies can help you transition into employment or your college placement and let you build on skills and strategies that you have used in your educational experience. Such technologies can demonstrate to employers that you have the skills and strategies already in place for the transition into employment and allow you concentrate on getting on with the job in hand. Examples of such commonly used devices and software are:

- Dictaphones
- Audio pens
- Ergonomic aids
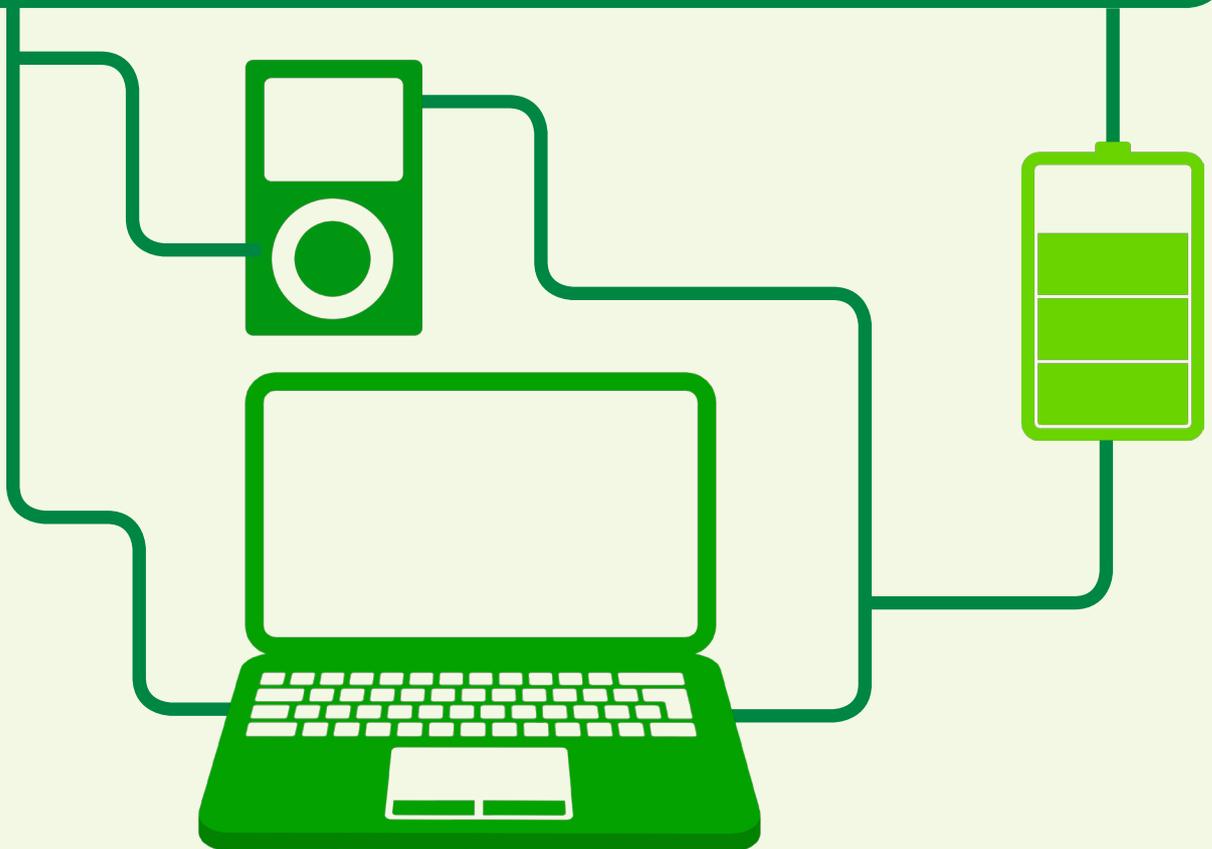- Voice recognition software
- Grammar & spelling checkers
- Screen magnifiers
- Text to speech software
- Portable scanners

Activity Checklist

- ☐ Consider your potential placement or work activities – does technology have a role on making these easier to engage in?
- ☐ Do you like using technology & can see its benefits?
- ☐ Have you the necessary skills to use your technology on placement or within the workplace?
- ☐ If unsure about the need or the use Assistive Technology contact the AT officer in TCD – **Andrew Costello** to advise you on support strategies if you have problems with your assistive technology.
- ☐ Check out the free and easy to use tools that you can benefit from to ensure an easier transition to you **employment/ placement**.

Developing your CV

Your time in college can be a great opportunity to develop your C.V. Employers are interested in a lot more than your academic performance. They want to see and hear about things you did to enhance your skill set in college. Look for opportunities to build up your CV continuously during your time in college.

"College actually provides you with a huge chance to develop your CV, your explanation to future employers about how you manage things, so it is worth taking up whatever opportunities you have."

"Don't waste your summers and free time during the college year. Do voluntary work in your chosen career area if you can't get a job in it, get to know the way the system works in Ireland."

TCD Graduates

Activity Checklist

- ☐ Consider joining a club or society that interests you, or become more actively in running a club or society. Remember, you are not just having fun, you are adding to your CV while acquiring necessary skills and experience!

- ☐ Check out the voluntary opportunities advertised by the **Trinity Civic Engagement Office**. Apply for the **Dean of Students' Roll of Honour**, which recognises commitment in voluntary activity.

- ☐ Explore professional networking opportunities; including setting up a LinkedIn account to display your skills and experience. Use other social media such as Twitter.

- ☐ Read **CV advice**, attend a CV clinic, or make an appointment to meet your Careers Adviser.

- ☐ Speak to your **Careers Adviser** or consult **VACWORK** for summer opportunities. Use the **tools provided by the Careers Service** to better understand your interests, values and skills.

- ☐ Keep a look out for any opportunities advertised specifically for students with disabilities. The Disability Service will keep you informed of these.

Networking

Planning your Career: Advice for Current Students

You

Freshmen Years

Sophister Years

Taught Postgraduates

Research Graduates

Placements

Career Path

Advice for students: Freshmen Years (Years 1 & 2)

By choosing to study a particular course you have probably already made a decision about what general area you would like to work in. Perhaps you need to narrow this down, for example, what area of business or science would you like to specialise in? Or maybe your study has led you to the conclusion that you no longer want to work in an area that interested you, before entering College.

During the Freshman years you have time to consider your future career options, without the pressure of your thesis, final exams, or imminent graduation! Your Freshman years are an ideal time to explore your interests and develop your skills.

☐ Consider your course – what do you like and dislike about it? What does this tell you about potential career choices?

☐ List your outside interests, such as hobbies or volunteering.

☐ List your values.

☐ List your previous work experience. What have you enjoyed about it? What have you disliked?

☐ Look at the **tools provided by the Careers Service** to better understand your interests, values and skills.

☐ Try a new interest or role to develop your skills - what will make you stand out at an interview? Develop your CV through extra-curricular activities, internships, voluntary work, or involvement in clubs or societies.

Advice for students: Sophister Years (Years 3 & 4)

By now you may have a good idea of the general area you would like to work in following graduation. The next step is to consider the possible career paths within your chosen sector. For example, you may wish to work in finance, but in what area? During your Sophister years you can consider these choices and begin working on your transition plan, for example: Where do you want to be six months from graduation? Two years from graduation? What do you need to do now to make that happen?

Activity Checklist

- ☐ Consider your future employment options if you have not done so already, for example, list what you like and dislike in your course, list your outside interests, values and your previous work experience. What does this tell you about possible career paths? Look at the **tools provided by the Careers Service** to better understand your interests, values and skills.

- ☐ Continue to add skills and experience to your CV through summer work experience and internships, volunteering, societies, extra-curricular activities etc.

- ☐ Speak to your Careers Adviser about finding experience relevant to your chosen career path.

- ☐ During your Sophister years you are likely to begin applying for post-graduation jobs or post graduate courses. Ensure you tailor your CV to the specifications of each career / course.

- ☐ Explore the links and resources at the end of this booklet.

"Utilize the experience that your lecturers have."

TCD Graduate

Advice for students: Taught Postgraduates

Most taught post-graduate courses are a year in length, or two at most. This means that you should actively begin planning your next transition almost immediately, if possible. Your reasons for choosing your course will help you decide your next move. You may be seeking to improve your understanding of a discipline in order to prepare for a PhD, or undergoing a specialist programme with a specific career objective in mind. You may be studying a more generalised course, and are unsure of the next move, or you may be certain you now want to move into employment. Information for **postgraduate students** is available at the Careers Service website.
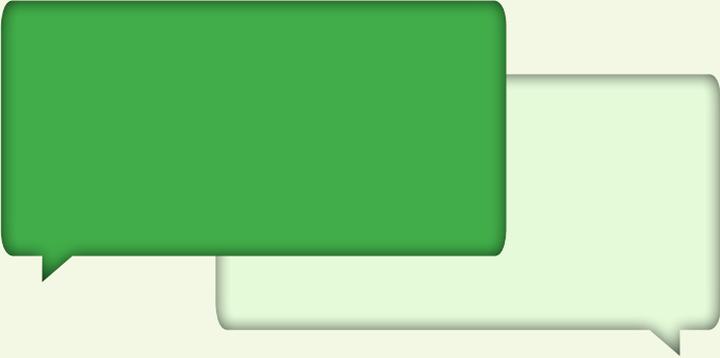
If you are preparing for further postgraduate study:

Activity Checklist

- ☐ Identify areas of interest within your discipline.
- ☐ See the **A-Z of Postgraduate Study** on the Careers Service website- this includes information on awards.
- ☐ Once areas are identified, research these areas more fully, possible integrating them into assignments throughout the year. Are there gaps in the research that you could potentially work on?
- ☐ Speak to academics in the field. Get their opinions of your area and of potential supervisors / institutions.
- ☐ Explore the links and resources at the end of this booklet.

If you are unsure of your next move:

Activity Checklist

☐ Consider your future job possibilities if you have not done so already, for example, list what you like and dislike in your course, list your outside interests, values and your previous work experience. Consider what this tells you about possible career paths.

☐ Look at the **tools provided by the Careers Service** to better understand your interests, values and skills. Speak to your Careers Adviser.

Advice for students: Research Postgraduates

While many postgraduate research students will seek to enter academia following graduation, there are numerous other career options available. You may be seeking alternative options to an academic career. Information for **postgraduate students** is available at the Careers Service website.

Preparing for an academic career:

Activity Checklist

- [ ] Prepare your academic CV, and seek to enhance it through publications, conference presentations, and teaching experience.
- [ ] Prepare a non-academic CV also. Be aware that competition for academic jobs can be fierce. Seek non-academic job alternatives too. The Careers Advisory Service is available to assist you.
- [ ] Get to know your discipline. Make connections through conferences, online networks etc.
- [ ] Speak to your supervisor and other academics in the field. Get their opinions of your discipline area and of potential future job opportunities in research or teaching.
- [ ] Investigate possible funding opportunities following your graduation.

Advice for students on Placements

On many professional courses in Trinity, students must complete a series of work placements. Starting placements can be daunting for any student, and especially for a student with a disability, who may need to consider additional factors such as disclosure and how to request reasonable accommodations. Some of the information below may be transferable to students completing other courses, who have secured internships or work placements.

Opportunities provided by placements

You can explore how your disability might affect your experience in the work place while you still have access to College-based supports, such as the College Disability Service and placement coordinators. You can explore strategies for managing your disability with advice from the Disability Service and your programme. This will help you to understand and to articulate clearly and confidently the reasonable accommodations you will need, when applying for your first graduate job.

You can practice disclosure so that you are more confident in what you want to say, when you want to say it, and who you want to say it to, when you begin your first graduate job.

You can use the placement to demonstrate your ability, skills, professionalism and competence. Placements offer great opportunities for making professional links and obtaining references for the future.

Preparing for Placement - What should I do?

Before placement begins:

Pre-Placement planning meeting

The Disability Service can arrange to meet students on professional courses prior to their first placement starting. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss any support needs that may arise on the placement, and to arrange reasonable accommodations.
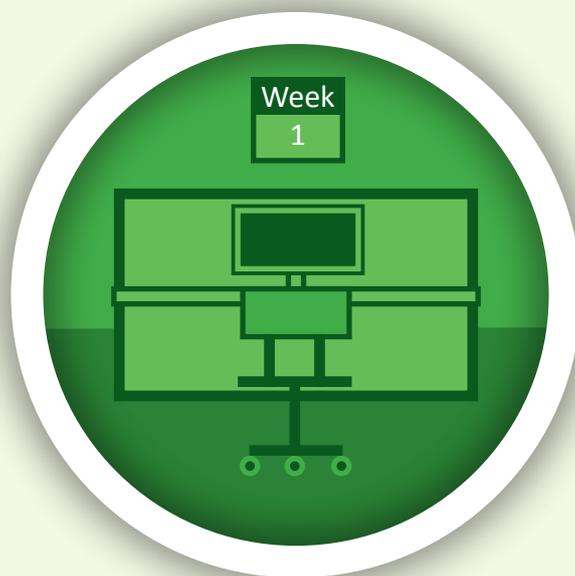
Activity Checklist

☐ Consider what your roles and responsibilities could be on your upcoming placement.

☐ Complete a SWOT analysis of the placement site, and yourself. These are the possible Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that you perceive, based on your knowledge of the placement site and your own abilities.

☐ Reflect on any recent placements. What have you learnt from them? Ask yourself:

- Do I need to disclose my disability?

- Do I know what reasonable accommodations would be appropriate for me to have?

- Have I reviewed how I am going to be assessed, and discussed any elements of the competencies/levels that I am concerned about with my Disability Officer/ practice educator?

Week One: Initial Meeting

What is the placement environment like? Consider the physical and social aspects of the workplace. Ask yourself, do you need particular supports to enable you to meet your roles and responsibilities in this environment?

Week 1

Activity Checklist

☐ Consider how you learn. Do you need information to be delivered in a particular way?

☐ Consider how you prefer to receive feedback. Do you need feedback to be presented in a particular format? Do you need feedback to be paced or timed in a certain way?

☐ Consider disclosure. Based on your needs, or in order to meet your roles and responsibilities in this environment, do you need to disclose?

First Formal Supervision:

Activity Checklist

- ☐ Identify which roles and responsibilities are essential / desirable based on time frame and competency level.
- ☐ Agree ways you can demonstrate your competencies.
- ☐ Established regular formal supervision times to monitor your progress in meeting competencies.
- ☐ Set a date for a mid-way evaluation.
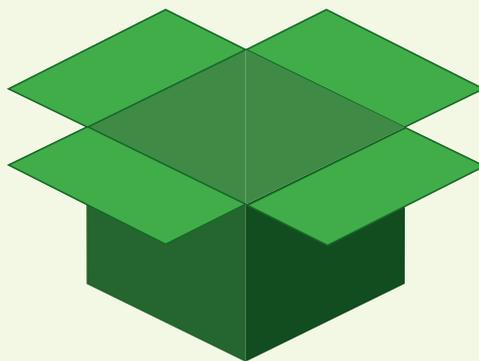- ☐ Set a date for a final assessment.

Mid Way Supervision:

Activity Checklist

- ☐ Prepare a list of examples demonstrating essential competencies in assessment form areas. Ask yourself:
  - Am I progressing satisfactorily towards reaching competency at final assessment?
  - If I have disclosed, are my reasonable accommodations being implemented?
  - What do I need to do to attain competency in the remainder of placement? Do I need additional supports/ accommodations to enable me to attain these competencies?
  - Do I need additional support from my placement coordinator in university or from my Disability Officer regarding reasonable accommodations?

Activity Checklist

- ☐ Comment on your progression from mid to final evaluation. Provide specific examples to support your self-assessment.
- ☐ Describe your current knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- ☐ Provide areas for development and improvement in future placements.
- ☐ What were the facilitators or barriers to a successful placement?
- ☐ How can you implement this in future placements?
- ☐ Review what were the advantages or disadvantages of disclosing or not disclosing.
- ☐ Consider organising a meeting with your Disability Officer and Placement Coordinator to review and plan for future placements?

Resources

Clinical Placement Handbook for Nursing Students – While this guide was developed specifically for nursing students, some of the guidelines are applicable for all students on placement. The Disability Service is currently developing a placement guide for all students, and this will be available from our website shortly.

Links and Resources

TCD Careers Service Resources

Plan your Career: These resources from the TCD Careers Service aim to help you to better understand your interests, values and skills.

Careers Adviser: You can contact your Careers' Adviser to make an appointment to discuss your future.

VACWORK: For holiday work opportunities and internships. Careers Service vacancy listing updated daily.

Interview Tips from the Careers Advisory Service.

Job Hunting Resources

Gradireland.com: Irish graduate website on which you can search for graduate jobs.

Prospects.ac.uk: UK graduate website on which you can search for both postgraduate courses and graduate jobs.

Target Jobs: UK website with graduate career advice and jobs.

Disability Specific

AHEAD Information for Graduates: A central resource for graduates with disabilities seeking employment. It includes information on the Willing Able Mentoring programme (WAM), a paid internship programme for graduates with disabilities.

Willing Able Mentoring works in partnership with public and private sector employers to secure paid internships for graduates with disabilities.

> "Consider a **WAM placement** after graduation; it was a great experience for me"
>
> **TCD Graduate**

Employability: offers a job matching service that matches business recruitment needs to graduates with disabilities, and supports the employee through the transition process.

AHEAD's Booklet on Disclosure

Academic positions

Jobs.ac.uk - Jobs in science, research, academic and administrative employment in Ireland, the UK and elsewhere

Vitae: Vitae is a UK organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes.

Developing as a Researcher – guides potential academics through an audit and analysis of skills in order to create a personal development plan.

Developing your Research Career – Information on what you can do as a graduate student to develop your future academic career.

Postgraduate courses

Postgradireland: Online/Searchable Postgraduate Directory of taught courses in Ireland and links to Irish, UK & international study sites.

Qualifax: Online/Searchable Directory of courses in Ireland.

Study in Europe: a range of databases of courses in Europe

Transition to Employment
Self-Assessment

Employment History

Other qualifications, skills, awards:

Current Transition Plan (or priorities, interests, opportunities

Details of Disability:

Expected special requirements/adaptations in the workplace:

Do you wish to disclose your disability?

If so how and when do you want to disclose your disability?

Current Priorities for transition planning:

1.

2.

3.

Action (what I want/need to do)　　　　　　**When?**

1.

2.

3.

Click here to visit
the T2E website