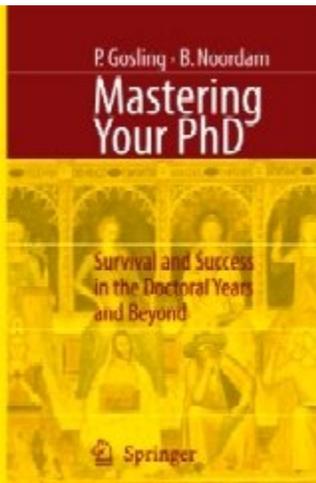


**CAREER DEVELOPMENT : ARTICLES**

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**Mastering Your Ph.D.: Preparing for Your Post-Ph.D. Career**

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Netherlands  
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Among the most difficult decisions during your Ph.D. is what to do when you're finished. You're probably familiar with the "typical" career track: Ph.D., postdoc, then a climb through the academic ranks of assistant, associate, and full professorship. Any other path is often looked upon with derision by peers, as though leaving academia means you can't handle the academic track.

But this "move up or move out" attitude is a purely academic perspective. Universities don't just train new professors; they prepare people to contribute to society in many ways. In the Netherlands, for example, 60% of Ph.D.s leave university right away to take jobs in corporate, not-for-profit, or government organizations.

Most of the remaining 40% continue their academic careers as postdoctoral fellows. But within 5 years of graduating, half of those will wander off the academic campus. The picture is the same in other Western countries. So, your career is likely to take you outside the hallowed halls of academia. Get used to the idea.

As you move toward the last months of your Ph.D., consider the full range of employment options. What you do directly after graduation will have a major impact on your professional progression. Evaluating all the options is a lot of work, so allow time to do it properly and start well in advance.

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We suggest splitting the job-search process into two parts. First, decide which type of job appeals to you most. Then start the application process, which typically takes several months. You should start evaluating your options at least 6 months before you graduate.

**WHAT REALLY MAKES YOU TICK?**

Your education puts you in a position to find a job that not only pays the bills but also provides satisfaction. To discover what type of job will do the trick, analyze what you most enjoyed while working as a Ph.D. student. Was it working in a team of enthusiastic young people exploring unknown (scientific) territories or working to solve a tough problem? Or perhaps you were most excited by the challenge of mastering particular technical skills, learning the multidisciplinary aspects of your project, or teaching. Maybe you were most enthusiastic about the impact your results have (or are likely to have) on society.

At first glance, you may conclude that your particular research topic makes you want to get out of bed in the morning. But after more careful consideration, you're likely to realize that narrower aspects of your project are more important than the topic itself. Ask close friends what they see as your strengths; friends can often see what you were best at and what gave you the most satisfaction, even when you can't see it yourself.

**MAP OUT YOUR OPTIONS**

Somehow you need to make sense of all the possibilities--yes, there are lots of them--and discover which path is right for

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