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Where to start:

- Get involved in student media. It looks odd if you say in an application how much you have always wanted to work in the media if you haven’t done any at university

- Don’t wait to be asked. If you have an idea for a piece for CUTV, CAMFM, the student papers or Watersprite (film) go and pitch it and then create it. If you don’t know how, find out

- It doesn’t matter if you don’t know which area of the media you want yet; any interest will show commitment and the beginnings of talent (hopefully!). You must demonstrate passion for the media; you can’t just say you have it

- You may need to show cuttings, a show reel or a short film you’ve made when applying for courses or jobs

- You can catch up later if you haven’t done this at university but you will be at a disadvantage and will need to start from scratch

- Get work experience outside university as well. Be proactive and write asking for this, you’re unlikely to see adverts inviting applications for work experience

What employers look for:

Demonstrable commitment to the media

Key skills for any kind of media:

- persistence
- ideas
- networking
- ability to adjust style for different audiences
- ability to recognise a story and ...
- get that story across to the public
- relevant technical skills

Improving your chance of success

- Take every opportunity to get media experience; start early

- Get a range of experience – print, broadcast, video, film, photography, arts etc.

- Develop online/internet and practical programme-making skills

- Network – contacts are crucial. It’s part of the media job/lifestyle. Use GradLink to contact alumni in the media www.careers.cam.ac.uk/GradLink. Networking doesn’t come naturally to many people but can develop the skill. Always follow up networking leads and thank those who have helped you.
- **Research** the media: read, listen to, and watch the output, and read the media press. Have thought through opinions on it all.

- Attend the [Comms and Creative Event](#) (Lent term) and any Media information sessions – see [Careers Service Online Diary](#).

- Consider postgraduate media courses as a way in. They are a well-respected route into the industry.

- Gain **life experience**: anything you do – prison-visiting, going to China, working in an investment bank etc. – can be seen as valuable.

- Be **flexible** about where you apply at the start of your career. Everyone wants the BBC, Channel 4, Times, Guardian etc. You’ll raise the odds of success if you apply for the independent content producers who have a lower brand profile.

- Have a good, original, non-cliché, answer to the obvious interview question:
  
  “Why do you want to be a journalist/TV producer/make films?”

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**Types of job**

In Print Journalism most students want to be a journalist or editor
In Broadcast Journalism the majority want to be a presenter, producer or director
In Film it’s generally Producer or Director

Think beyond these roles. When the credits roll at the end of a programme or film there are literally hundreds of job titles listed.

- Casting
- Researching
- Development
- Co-ordination
- Fundraising
- Special Effects
- Location sourcing
- Logistics
- Production
- Technical
- Distribution
- Sales and Marketing

The list goes on and on and on....... You may not have heard of many of these roles but try to remain open to them at least until you know what they are. Talking to people, look at job descriptions even if you don’t intend applying for the job. Your niche in the media may not be what you thought it was.

- Who is it that chooses music for documentaries
- Who is it that finds and chooses locations?
- Who decides what will appeal to a certain audience.
- Who films, edits, does the voice over, writes the commentary, pitches the original idea, commissions work, decides which production company to commission, sets the budget, casts the presenters etc.
Bridging the gap from unpaid work experience to paid work

The majority of people start out with unpaid work experience. Try not to see this as a necessary evil. Though you may not be paid financially you should gain invaluable experience, contacts and sector knowledge. This demonstrates to an employer that you are not just theoretically a good investment; you have a value in the workplace.

The Careers Service Summer Bursary Scheme - media strand. A limited number of bursaries are available to help enable access to low or unpaid work experiences/internships (undergraduate and PhD students only).

Paid graduate schemes

Graduate schemes are not the norm in the media though there are a few, highly competitive examples. To apply for these you should have at least 4 work experiences (outside University). A fortnight in each place should give you the variety of experience needed. Most people get in through work experience and an entry level job.

The unpaid work placement extension trap

There are many urban myths about unpaid work experiences extending up to a year and beyond. Yes you do need to build your CV before someone will pay you. However, once you start to work unsupervised, have regular responsibilities and if they value your work enough to want to keep you then they should start to pay you.

Unpaid work placements should ideally be up to a month and an absolute maximum of 3 months. If you have a CV demonstrating commitment with a few good work experience placements it is possible to start being paid after a fortnight with an organisation.

Do not be afraid to bring up the subject of money. If an employer asks you to stay on don’t say yes before talking about salary and other terms and conditions. Go into the discussion informed. Find out what minimum wage is, what your peers are being paid before you go in.
Routes into media – based on real Cambridge graduates

GradLink – Freelance Assistant Production Co-ordinator

Career Path
- Graduated with a Classics degree
- 6 months' worth of unpaid runner/internship work on short and student films
- Media Planner and Buyer in small advertising media strategy company (lateral move to earn money but remain linked to the media)
- Unpaid internship at Heyday Films which led to
- Unpaid work experience placement at Ruby Films which developed into a paid role which led to
- Freelance job as paid production runner on a romantic comedy film. Made contacts and promoted to production team under line producer.
- Freelance job (with the same line producer) working on a Kenneth Brannagh project
- Freelance job (with the same line producer) on a BAFTA award winning Britz
- Producers Assistant on BBC/HBO Film also produced by Rainmark Films
- 2016: Freelance Production Co-ordinator/Supervisor – including The Imitation Game

This demonstrates that with a little perseverance, hard work and networking you can step from unpaid work experience onto a media career ladder.

GradLink – Editor, BBC, The World Tonight and Newshour

Career Path
First degree English followed by a Masters in European Studies
Diploma, Journalism – Cardiff University
Reporter/Producer Look East, Norwich (2 yrs)
Reporter/Producer, BBC News, Brussels (2 yrs)
World Duty Editor, BBC News, London (1 yr)
Senior Producer, BBC World Affairs Unit, London (4 yrs)
Deputy Editor, Middle East Bureaux (4 yrs)
Editor, Middle East Bureaux (1 yr)
Asia Bureaux Editor, Beijing (6 yrs)
Editor, The World Tonight and Newshour

This GradLink demonstrates a willingness to be flexible, to start local and change jobs and country every few years to progress their career.
GradLink – Financial Times via Harry Potter and postgraduate training

Career Path
- Graduated with English Degree
- Marketing Assistant and PA to Head of Publicity at Verve Pictures (independent film distributor)
- Intern, Heyday Films
- Production Assistant, Harry Potter film
- Writer/reviewer, ThreeWeeks newspaper, Edinburgh Festival
- 2 weeks work experience, The Hampstead & Highgate Express, London
- Feature article published in The Guardian Society section. (I pitched the article while doing work experience at The Ham & High).
- 3 month unpaid internship at Newsweek magazine, London, assisting bureau staff with research, pitching and writing my own stories and working as a P.A. to the Bureau Chief. Internship was followed by some paid freelance work for the London bureau.
- 2 weeks work exp., Cambridge Evening News.
- Postgraduate Diploma in Newspaper Journalism, City University, London
- Now in paid work at the Financial Times

Needed to be paid at the start so took a job within the media but in a different department. Having experienced film from different angles decided it wasn’t for them and moved laterally into newspaper journalism. Each time paid work comes from networking from the unpaid starting point. Having established that they enjoyed newspaper journalism it was the right time to invest in the course. Investing in a broadcast media course immediately after graduation would have been a waste of time and money.

Further study

Do you really need a further qualification?

Print Journalism - postgraduate media courses offer a recognised route into the industry – some employers recruit directly from courses. You do not have to do a full Masters but an NCTJ accredited diploma is expected in newspaper journalism. See www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk to see the number of jobs requiring an NCTJ course.

In other areas of the media, courses may or may not enhance your employability – the golden rule is to go for those courses with a high practical content in addition to theoretical information (also ask for details of what jobs the previous year's course participants are now in). In the media hands on experience counts every time so do not do a course if it is purely theoretical.

STOP AND THINK - Any postgraduate course is an investment in both time and money.
- Talk to the organisations who will be recruiting for the jobs you want. Ask if they value the course you are considering.
- Use GradLink to ask similar questions. If they did a course do they regret it or did it make all the difference.
• Do job descriptions you look at require another qualification or are they looking for specific skills and/or experience? Would you be better off spending your time gaining hands on experience and accumulating knowledge and contacts?

• Is this the right time to do a postgraduate course? See case studies in the Routes Into the Media section. Before you make this investment be 100% sure about the direction you want to take.

What added value will you get from a course?

Experience - If your CV is a little light in experience a course can rectify this if you choose one with a high content of work placements. A course is never instead of work experience.

Contacts - You should start making invaluable contacts through the course. Many are taught by freelance journalists with hands on experience to pass on to you. Keep those contacts going after the course.

Skills and Technical know-how - Print journalism – shorthand. A must for interviewing out in the field. Broadcast Media – camera and editing skills.

Researching courses

Research courses thoroughly to ensure they will enhance your CV and not repeat too much of what you already know. Go to Open Days and talk to course alumni if available.

A good course will give you the opportunity to make contacts and often jobs are secured following course based work experience placements. The contacts are usually local to the course. If you don’t want contacts in rural Scotland then don’t do a course there.

Don’t just take the course providers word for it. If they say all alumni of the course are now in jobs that’s great. But what jobs are they doing? If you’re in the media you will need to learn to probe and ask questions to get the answers you want.

Funding further study

There isn’t much funding for media postgraduate study. Always ask the institution if there are any local bursaries or scholarships and also where previous students have gained financial assistance.

Creative Skillset

www.creativeskillset.org/funding

The Sector Skills Council for the Creative Media. They manage a range of funding streams including those to encourage greater ethnic diversity in the media and funding for those with disability.
**Fulbright Alistair Cooke Award in Journalism**
[www.fulbright.co.uk](http://www.fulbright.co.uk)

This award is offered for a Masters in Journalism at any accredited US university for UK applicants only. The award covers maintenance and tuition fees for the first year of study only.

**Scott Trust Bursaries**
[www.gmgplc.co.uk/the-scott-trust/bursaries/journalism/](http://www.gmgplc.co.uk/the-scott-trust/bursaries/journalism/)

The Scott Trust Ltd, owner of Guardian Media Group plc, offers multiple bursaries each year for aspiring journalists to study for a postgraduate qualification in newspaper, web or broadcast journalism.

**The Varsity Trust**
[www.varsity.cam.ac.uk](http://www.varsity.cam.ac.uk) (Varsity Trust on menu)

This annual scholarship competition offers funds to assist Cambridge University student journalists with costs of professional training after graduation. To be eligible for an award, you must have the offer of a place on a postgraduate journalism course. Advertised Lent term (deadline Easter term) in Varsity, interviews May/June. More details on the website or from trust@varsity.co.uk **Top Tip:** Places on postgraduate courses are often confirmed during the period directly before finals. If you are planning to apply for this scholarship consider drafting your application in Lent Term well in advance.

**The Wellcome Trust – Science media scholarships**
[www.wellcome.ac.uk](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk)

These studentships offer financial support for two practising biomedical scientists to undertake a postgraduate qualification in Science Media Production at Imperial College London or the National Film and Television School.

Some Graduate Schemes include an accredited course as part of the programme. Check before you pay for one yourself.

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**Awards and competitions**

The following awards and competitions can be a little sporadic. Some run one year but not the next. They also tend to disappear from websites once the deadlines have passed making them harder to find the next year. **If** we hear about them we do post work experience, internships and graduate schemes on [Vacancies & Opportunities](#).

**Nico Colchester Journalism Fellowships**

These [Journalism Fellowships](#) were established in memory of Nico Colchester, who died in 1996 after an outstanding career at The Financial Times, The Economist and The Economist Intelligence Unit. Deadline is usually around March/April. Applications invited from young or would-be journalists from Britain and Continental Europe, who have to submit an article in English on a given topic - watch website for details.

**Writers Dock**
[www.writersdock.org](http://www.writersdock.org)

A forum for writers with advice on starting out in writing. Competitions are sometimes advertised.
Finding other competitions
Try the Media Awards section of www.HoldTheFrontPage.co.uk

Graduate schemes

There aren’t many graduate schemes in the media and organisations may run a graduate scheme one year and not the next. Do not rely on a graduate scheme as your route into the media as only the larger organisations run them, there are only a couple of places on each and they are NOT the norm.

Pre-finalists should look at these anyway to find out what the criteria are. The main one is always demonstrating a commitment to the media (i.e. work experience).

The following organisations often run graduate/trainee schemes:

Associated Newspapers
BBC
Bloomberg
Mailonline
Channel 4
Divento
Euromoney
Guardian News and Media
Telegraph Media Group
The Financial Times
The Times
Thomson Reuters

BBC – There are many BBC trainee schemes from digital to journalism and broadcast www.bbc.co.uk/careers/trainee-schemes

www.journoresources.org.uk has a good list of schemes and the times of year they usually come up.

Careers Service Bursary Scheme – media strand

Careers Service Bursaries of up to £500 to help fund travel, living and other day-to-day expenses for students looking to take a minimum of four weeks unpaid work experience in the media. Bursaries do not replace salary you would have earned if you had been doing a different job.

http://www.careers.cam.ac.uk/bursary/index.asp
Media resources at the careers service and beyond

THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CREATIVE EVENT (Lent Term): includes media organisations and sometimes freelancers. Network, gain insights and some set up work experience here.

Careers Service website www.careers.cam.ac.uk

- **Media sector pages**
- **Online diary** - Briefings, skills sessions and panel discussions
- **Podcasts** of talks by professionals in the media. Listen to them via www.careers.cam.ac.uk for first hand advice.
- **GradLink** - Use this for media contacts.
  - GradLink is a database of Cambridge graduates who are willing to talk to you informally about their jobs in the media or other areas and, more importantly, how they got them.
  - There are currently over 300 GradLinks in media or media-related jobs.
- **CamCareers** – sign up to receive information on the Media.
- **Vacancies & Opportunities** (search Vacation Opportunities)

Careers service library:

**Periodicals**
Broadcast (weekly)
Media Week (weekly)

Feedback files - Read feedback from recent graduates about their media experiences.

**Takeaway publications**
Networking – Quick Guide

**Occupational files**
Reference files in the Careers Service Library giving an overview and insight into the variety within the Media Sector - Broadcasting, Journalism, Radio, Television, Film & Video, Authorship, Creative Writing, Writing Competitions, Publishing/Writing.

**Occupational profiles**
Available in the Library or at www.prospects.ac.uk – Explore types of jobs – Publishing, Media & Performing Arts

**Reference books**
A guide to who’s who in media, marketing and advertising
Career handbook for TV, radio, film, video & interactive media
Careers in media and film: the essential guide
Contacts 2014: stage, television, film, radio & interactive media
Getting into films and television
How to get a job in television
How to work as a freelance journalist
How to write for television: a guide to writing and selling TV and radio scripts
NCTJ essential guide to careers in journalism (The)
Production management for TV and film
Starting your career in broadcasting: working on and off the air in radio and television
TV: an insider’s guide; how to be a success in the TV industry
Useful websites

www.afi.com: American Film Institute: links to Cinemedia, a very large international film & media directory
www.bbc.co.uk/jobs: BBC Online for careers
www.bectu.org: BECTU Trade Union
www.bfi.org.uk: British Film Institute
www.creativeskillset.org: Skillset, media careers info/training organisation
www.dmgt.com/careers: Daily Mail & General Trust Group
www.media.gn.apc.org/mediaries.html: NUJ (for media resources)
www.hba.uk.co.uk: Hospital Broadcasting Association
www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk: site for regional, daily & weekly journalists; jobs, awards, training, searchable who’s who
www.hospitalradio.co.uk: site dedicated to hospital radio
www.journalism.co.uk: good links, including to news agencies
www.journoresources.org.uk: Journo Resources
www.mandy.com: International Film & TV Production Directory
www.theguardian.com/media: Guardian Online
www.media.info: Media Internet Directory
www.napa.org.uk: National Association of Press Agencies
www.nctj.com: NCTJ – journalism training
www.newspapersoc.org.uk: Newspaper Society
www.nftsfilm-tv.ac.uk: National Film & TV School (NFTS)
www.newmediaknowledge.co.uk: New Media Knowledge (interactive digital media)
www.onlinenewspapers.com: access to newspapers around the world
www.pact.co.uk: PACT (Independent TV companies)
www.ppa.co.uk: Periodicals Training Council
www.productionbase.co.uk: Advice on broadcast media
www.shootingpeople.org: filmmaker’s network
www.studentradio.org.uk: student radio association
www.wftv.org.uk: Women in Film & Television
www.womeninjournalism.co.uk: Women in Journalism