

# Your guide to researching your options

This guide brings together activities from the following sources:

- UCAS Pre-Application Toolkit
- Amazing Apprenticeships
- Unifrog Partner School Distance Learning Resources

And is designed to be used together with:

- Your Guide to Universities
- Your Guide to Apprenticeships, Training and Employment

Which are both available to download from the Tutorial course on Canvas



# Section 1 – Getting Started

If you are still considering your options around university, apprenticeships, subjects or careers, this is the section for you! Follow these three activities to guide your research and your thinking and don't forget you can get more support by emailing [careers@asfc.ac.uk](mailto:careers@asfc.ac.uk) or speaking to your tutor. You don't need to have a specific question or career goal to benefit from a careers appointment and our staff are very experienced in helping students that just don't know what they want to do! It is completely normal so get in touch if you are still not sure.

<p><b>Activity 1:</b> <b>Where are you now?</b></p> <p>This is a good starting point – it's about you, so think carefully about it and note down your thoughts or ideas.</p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Log into Unifrog and complete the Personality Profile &amp; Interest profile</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Complete the following table (Right)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your interests? (this could be hobbies, activities, or subjects).</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your skills? (the sorts of things you're good at - use obvious skills such as working with numbers, as well as softer skills such as being a good listener).</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you value? (the things that are important to you, both in your social and study life. For example family, work, socialising, personal interests, being active, money, structure, flexibility).</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What motivates you? (the things you're enthusiastic about, or encourage you to take action and get involved).</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your career aims? Are there any jobs or career areas you're interested in?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which subjects are you passionate about? Are there subjects you love or ones you wish you could study?</li> </ul>	

## Activity 2: Researching Career Ideas

### Step 1: Research, research research!

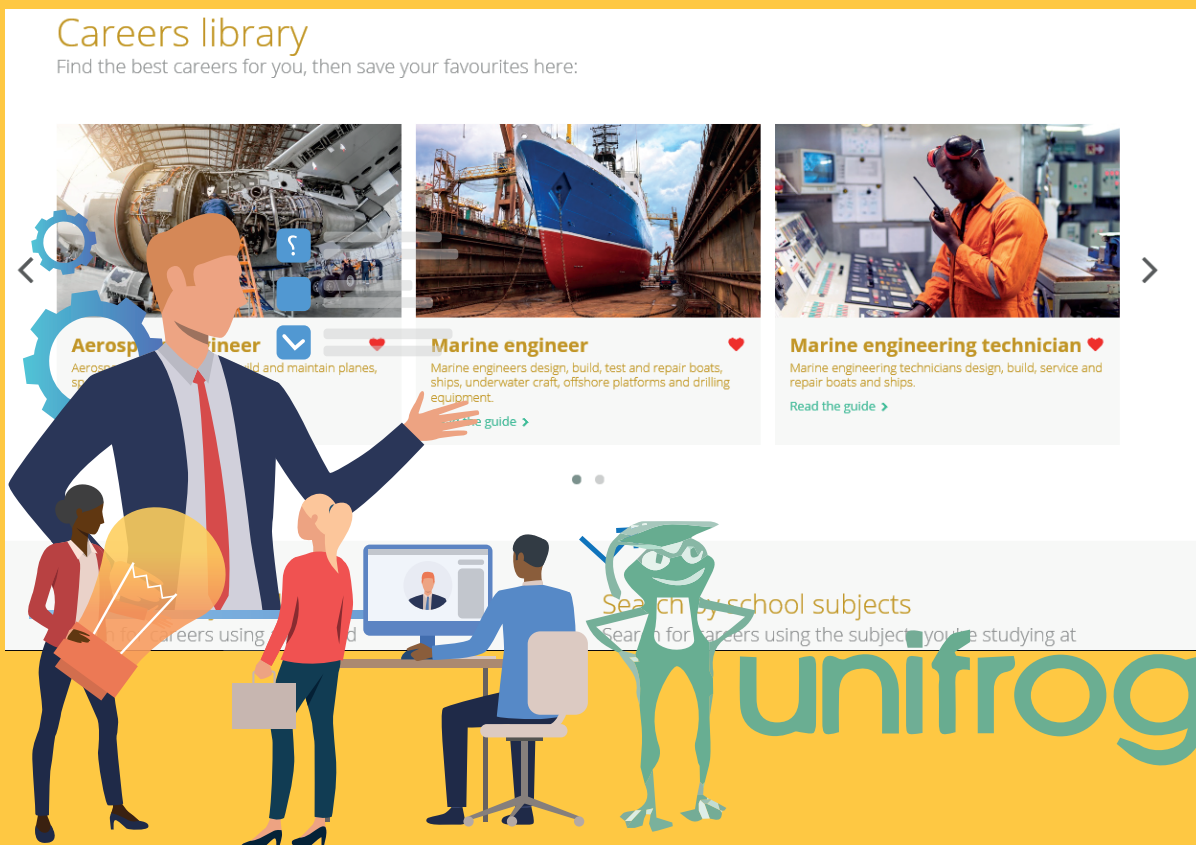
- **Find career ideas** and **explore jobs** as there are a huge variety of roles out there, many of which you might never have thought of.
- Watch videos from people working in a range of different roles and industries **here**.
- Complete the **Prospects Job Match and Career Planner** and read through the **Job Profiles**.

**Step 2:** Once you have an idea of the kinds of roles you might be interested in, log into Unifrog and go to the Careers library.



**Step 3:** Now you've narrowed down your options, you need to develop your understanding of what skills and qualifications are needed, and what you'd do on a day to day basis. Use the Careers Library on Unifrog to complete the table below:

Career Title	What you'll do	Competencies / Skills	Would I need a degree? Can I follow the apprenticeship route?	Working Hours, Environment & Salary



## Activity 3: What is important to you?

Create a list of what is important to you for all of your options post sixth form. Remember to think about:

- Whether you want to carry on studying and how long for
- Whether you want to work straight away
- How you like to learn
- How will finance affect your options?
- Do you want to travel/move away?
- Your long term goals



Important to me	Not important to me

# Activity 4: How are you going to get there?

Now you've explored a little of what's important to you and what you enjoy, you need to think about what options you have when you leave school or college. This is where you need to focus on the choices that you have. This activity is designed to get you thinking about which option might be the right pathway for you.

Consider and compare each of the post-18 options below, and what you've identified about yourself in the previous activities.

What are my options? Use the UCAS website links at the top of the table to familiarise yourself with what each option involves. Then compare them by asking yourself the questions below.

Click the links to read more 

Task	Going to university or college	Doing an apprenticeship	Taking a gap year	Entering the world of work
What I like the most with this option				
What I dislike the most with this option				
The potential benefits of this option are...				
The potential risks of this option are...				



## Section 2 – Researching Universities & Courses

This section has activities to help you start to decide which courses are best for you and to choose between different universities. Once you have firmed up your course options, this section will also help you to get to the nitty gritty of different courses and compare and contrast different university options.

### Activity 1: Where can your current subjects lead you?

**Step 1:** Log into Unifrog and open the ‘Subject Guides’ section. Here you can search for a range of courses and begin to select your favourites. You can search by course name or subject area. Think about your favourite subject or the fact you might find something entirely new. You might have a specific career goal in mind, or you might still be unsure. The best place to start – is with an open mind.



### Activity 2 : Use the UCAS Hub to explore your option.

**Step 1 : Explore: Use the ‘Explore’ tool to search detailed subject guides. These will give you a description of:**

- what the subject is all about
- entry requirements
- what you can do with a degree in the subject
- what it’s like to study
- apprenticeships that also might be available

### Step 2 : Find a subject to study:

Use the ‘Find a subject to study’ tool to give you some inspiration. It will give you some idea of what people like you have applied for in the past. Use the information to help you explore new ideas. Click on each of the subject links to learn more through the specific subject guides.

Remember to favourite anything you find in the Hub that you’re interested in by clicking on the heart; that way you can come back to it easily at any time. You will need to do this when you’re researching specific courses you might like to study. You can also pin any page from [ucas.com](https://ucas.com) to your dashboard this way too.

Course	University / Course No.1	University / Course No. 2	University / Course No.3	University / Course No.4
What are the entry requirements, do you meet them?				
What are the compulsory modules and are there any that you might not enjoy?				
What is the assessment method on this course? Ratio exam vs coursework?				
What are the career options that lead from this degree?				
Look this subject area up on Guardian league tables. Does this University score well?				
Does the course or university offer any internship or placement?				
Does this course offer any professional accreditation? Is the course recognised by appropriate professional bodies?				

### Activity 3: Let's get to the nitty gritty

Once you have narrowed your course choice down it is really important to look in more detail at the information that universities provide. Choose just one of the subjects that you have favoured on Unifrog (e.g. Biomedical Sciences OR Biology etc) and search for it at a couple of universities. You may need to use information on Unifrog, UCAS and the individual university pages. At this stage, it doesn't matter which universities you select. Use these pages to complete the table above.

It may be helpful to complete this table more than once, one per course choice that you are considering. REMEMBER- Courses with similar sounding names can have very different content so always look at the module titles before making final decisions. Courses with the same name can also vary from university to university as courses are developed to best suit academic's specialist areas.

**Reflection:** What is the real likelihood of me applying to this course. (Rank 1 – 10, with 10 being most likely)

# Activity 4: Choosing a University – what’s important to you?

Along with thinking about the type of subject you might like to study, it’s important to think about how uni will fit with you. The reality is, no one university is ‘best’ for everyone. You need to consider what type of university you want to attend; the experience can vary enormously. Here are some things to consider, make a note of your responses to some of these questions so you can come back to this when you’re doing more detailed research on your choices.



## Style and Size

Universities can have a focus on subject-based courses and research, or a greater focus on vocational courses.

Do you have a preference?

Do you want to study at a campus university (all in one place) or one that is spread out across a town/city with different locations?

Some larger universities can have more than 20,000 students, whereas some of the smallest have only a few thousand.

What would suit you best?

What’s important to you?



## Location

Some are based in large cities, others in smaller towns. This can have a major influence on the environment and lifestyle on offer.

Do you want to live at home? If not, how far away do you want to be?

Would you rather be in a city, countryside, or near the sea? Is the local surrounding area important? What would you like to have access to? E.g. museums, nightlife, walks, parks etc.

How will you travel around? Do you want to take a car? Will you need access to a train station/airport?

What’s important to you?



## Culture and facilities

This can be influenced by a range of factors, including the diversity of students who attend. What teams, clubs, or societies could you take part in? Can you continue to pursue a current hobby or interest?

Are the facilities important to you? What would you like to access? e.g. library, sporting facilities, students union.

Are there any specialist services you need access to?

What’s important to you?



## Graduate & Career Services

All universities collect destination statistics which is where students then go on to. It can be interesting to find out the types of jobs or further study students choose.

Is it important that they offer comprehensive career services? E.g. interview training help with job applications.

Do you want the opportunity to have a placement year or internship opportunity? What about the chance to study abroad?

What’s important to you?



## Costs

Tuition fees can vary between course providers. How might you pay for university? Would you be looking to try and access a scholarship or bursary?

What type of accommodation would you like? Halls of residence? Off campus living? Think longer term too not just for your first year when you might be in student halls.

How will you travel to lectures? Would this influence the type of place you would like?

What transport options are there? Would you be able to take a car (if that’s important to you)?

Think about other costs you might have such as socialising, food, clothes, study materials. Different regions of the country will vary in cost.

What’s important to you?



# Activity 5: Deep dive into your chosen subject

In depth research into a subject allows you to get a solid understanding of the discipline before you commit to studying it at university. Using the subject library in Unifrog will give you a great starting point for this.

**Step 1:** Log in to the Subjects library on Unifrog and select 3 subjects you want to know more about.



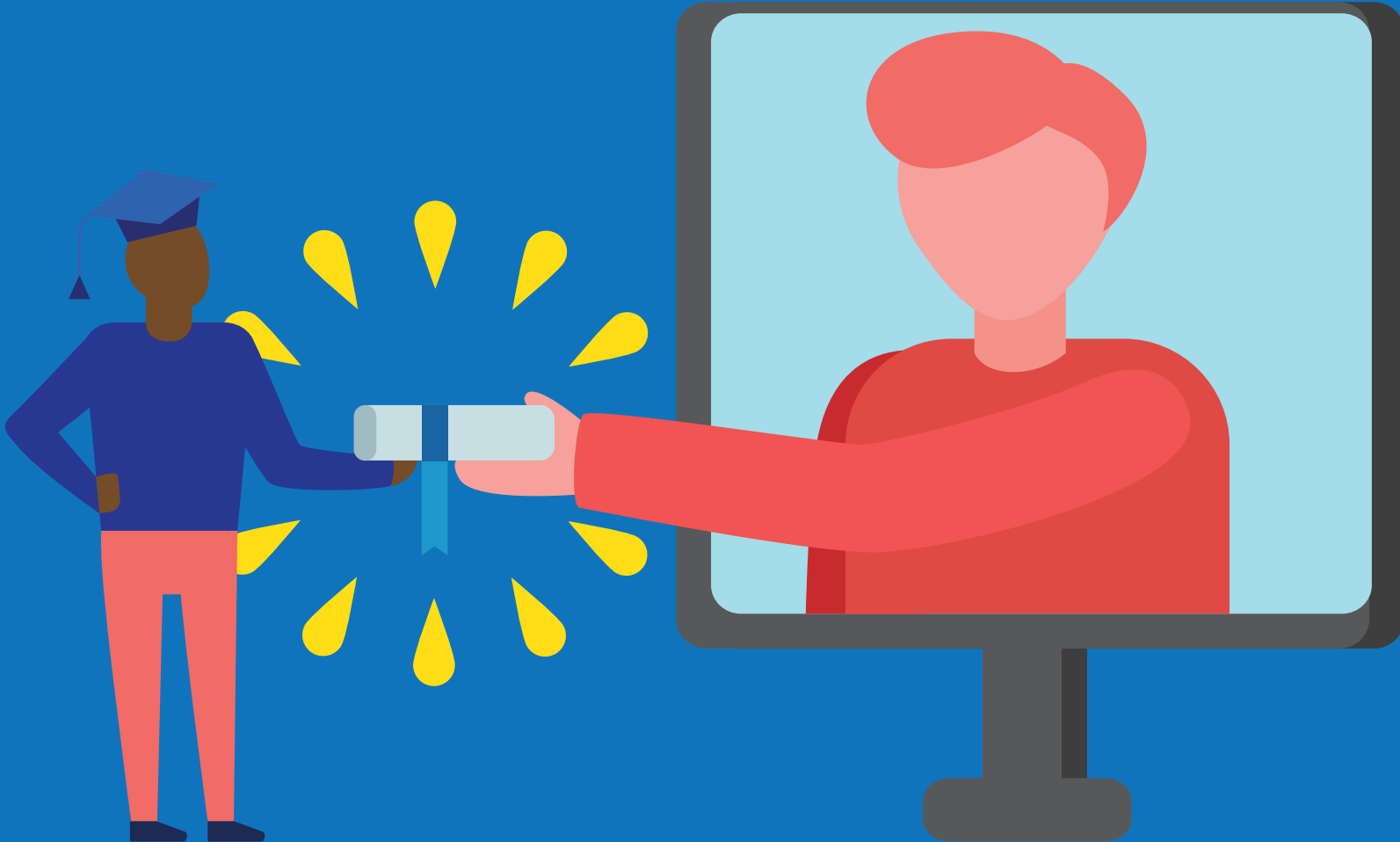
**Step 2:** Now click on the 'Geek out' link, complete the following table:

Subject	Which influential academic will you read more about?	Which video will you watch?	Which podcast will you listen to?



**Step 3:** Now you've got a wider reading, listening and watching list, it's important that you set targets for when you're going to complete them. Add dates to each column for when you're going to Geek out on each of them, and this will provide you with a task list. But, you need to choose one of them to do right now!

Once you've listened/watched/read about that topic area, write a short piece in the box below on what you have learnt, why it was so interesting, and what you hope to learn more about if you study that topic area at University. Don't forget, this will help you with your Personal Statement later on!



## Section 3 – Researching Apprenticeships

If you are considering apprenticeships, this section has activities to help you start to target your search and consider levels, roles and employers.

### Activity 1: What level is right for me?

There are several different apprenticeship levels available. Using the Unifrog Apprenticeships tool, read the first page, complete the table below:

Type	Level & Grade equivalent	Is this suited to me? (Yes/No)
Traineeship		
Intermediate		
Advanced		
Higher		
Degree Apprenticeship		
School Leaver Programme		



### Activity 2: Where can your current subjects lead you?

There are so many apprenticeships available, it can sometimes be difficult to decide which one might be the best for you. This section will help you to think of how you can explore and identify the best options for you and how they link to your favourite subjects.

**Click here** to see how each subject can link to interesting apprenticeship opportunities.

Use the notes box at the bottom of this page to note anything important whilst you are reading.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for taking notes during the reading process.

## Activity 3: What sectors could I work in? Apprenticeships are available across a wide range of sectors and specialisms.

### Step 1:

Have a look on **Apprenticeship Guide** to see what is available. As you are looking through the different apprenticeships, note down the ones that are interesting to you or stand out on the next page. Read the descriptions about what the apprenticeship involves and make a note on the next page of anything that you think is important.

**Step 2:** Try to pick at least one apprenticeship from each sector that you could potentially be interested in. Think about how this apprenticeship might link to subjects that you are currently studying / have studied, or how they link to something that you are interested in. Consider these questions:

- Do I know anyone who does this job?
- Who are the employers likely to be?
- Where are the employers likely to be located?
- What might the entry requirements be?
- How can I start researching further?

**Step 3:** Complete the table below

<b>Apprenticeships that interest me:</b>	<b>Employers that interest me:</b>
<b>Job roles I want to learn more about:</b>	<b>Job roles I definitely don't want to do:</b>



## Activity 4: Make a shortlist

**Step 1:** Using the Unifrog Apprenticeships tool, create a shortlist of 5 apprenticeships you're interested in.

**Step 2:** you've completed the shortlist, complete the table below. You will need to use the Careers library to locate labour market information (how many jobs are there in the industry).

Apprenticeship & Employer	Qualifications Required	Required Skills	How many jobs in this industry?	Location How will you travel?

## Activity 5 – Skills, skills, skills

Now you know which skills are required for these apprenticeships, make a start recording the skills you can evidence now in the Unifrog Competencies tool. Pick three skills which are required across the opportunities you have shortlisted.



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## Activity 6: What vacancies are out there?

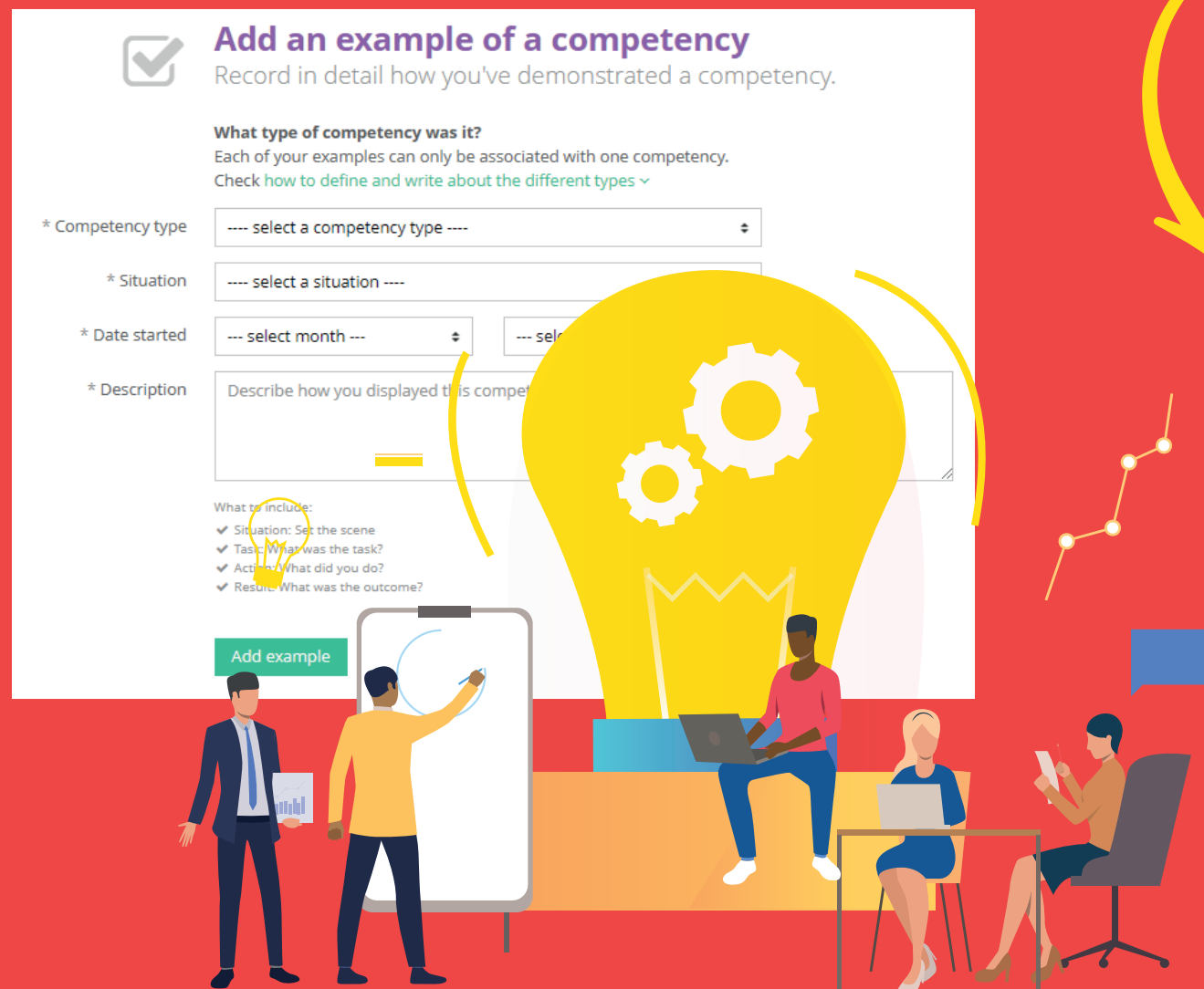
**Step 1:** Imagine you are trying to find Apprenticeship vacancies that you could apply for. Using the ASFC Apprenticeships Guide, choose a method of, or resource for, finding Apprenticeships from the links provided. Carry out a search using a range of search criteria. For example, you might choose to search by location, level, job title or industry sector.

**Step 2:** What criteria have you chosen to use for your search? Note them down here. A couple of examples given below to help you, but of course you don't have to use all of these or copy them exactly!

Resource	Job Title	Qualifications	Location	Sector	Employer
Gov.uk	Engineer	4	Manchester		Network Rail
Getmyfirstjob	Accountant		North West	Finance	

**Step 3:** What sort of results do you find? Note down how many vacancies come up? Use this table to record examples of job titles, employers, localities, salaries, qualifications included, any other interesting information within vacancy advertisements you have found.

Resource	Job Title	Employer	Location	Salary	Qualifications	Notes



**Step 4:** Try different combinations of these criteria to see what impact this has on the results. For example, if searching by location, try extending the distance, changing the postcode or radius, or searching by region rather than the local area. Or if there is a keyword or freehand option for your search, try inserting particular skills or knowledge required for the Apprenticeship (e.g. English, maths, customer service, etc)

What changes did you make to your original search? Note them down here:

What did you notice about the new results? Do you get more or fewer “hits”? Are they more or less relevant to what you’re looking for?

You can repeat this as many times as you wish by changing the resource you have chosen and the search criteria you use. Also remember that vacancies will come and go every day so the same search may produce very different results tomorrow or next week

