

**University of Opole
Faculty of Philology**

CAREER GUIDE

from competences to a sustainable career path

INDUCTION – RECOGNIZING WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU CAN TAKE FROM THE UNIVERSITY

Take your time to connect to the academic life of the University of Opole and broader social and cultural context of Opole and the Opole region. We believe this is the first step to recognition of who you are in the new context of the study programme and the next step in your educational development.

You may find yourself asking these questions: who am I right now?, where am I coming from?, where am I heading to?

The university education is different to the high-school one. Much more emphasis is put on you, your choices and your endeavours. Our study programmes are obviously full of lectures, knowledge, testing and achieving the educational outcomes, but it is all about you taking the opportunity, seeking further, digging deeper, asking for more.

The first step is to decide (even tentatively) who you are. Are you a theorist, who digests books in volumes or maybe a researcher, who applies different methodologies to inquire into the social or cultural or language realities? Or maybe you are an activist, designing projects and fighting for what matters using the inspiration and factual information obtained at the university? Or maybe you are an artist, trying to perceive and receive the world in order to live it and maybe even express yourself, your feelings and thoughts?

The second step is to look around. What is there at the university that is available and may enable you to become one of the above. From experienced professors to helpful assistant professors and lecturers, there are people who can advise you, point you to the right directions or resources. There are resources at the University of Opole too: halls and classrooms to organize events and workshops; or the Student Culture Center with multipurpose facilities. There are also symbolic resources, one can participate in the student's movement under the umbrella of the university, once approved, any project can get extra gravity and resonance when branded as the University of Opole.

THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

The period of study at the university is like a flash. You will not even notice when all the semesters are gone. You will hold the University of Opole diploma and look around for a job, occupation, engagement. It is good to plan ahead. This is not to say to ditch spontaneity – on the contrary: make sure you are able to afford a degree of freedom. Blueprinting starts now.

Fortunately, the decision does not have to be made now. However, it is the time you start looking around, asking questions: who do I want to be? What do I want to do? Who is doing things I would like to be doing? Where are those people? Can I connect to them? Can I use university resources to shadow the jobs, get to know the environments I am thinking about working in? Try to map the particular market or niche you want to get to. University libraries are full of academic studies of many industries. Roll up your sleeves, search the Internet, forums, groups of people in your dream occupation. Investigate it.

The next step is to be methodical about your future career: browse the job offers, look into requirements (do you meet them, what can you do with the help of the study programme, professors and the university to match the employers expectations). Many companies organize open doors or mock job interviews. Make sure you find them and study them. Getting to know the recruitment process not only may help you to get the job in question, but it will come in handy to make the actual decision: is this career path for me?

Sometimes, it is hard to make the decision, you are after all in a humanities to figure out things in your life. It is not a vocational school, with straightforward answers. Still, there are some things you can do. Ask yourself: what part of the studying process is your favourite – reading books, thinking about ideas, debating, writing up reports or essays, analyzing data, organizing projects; do you prefer to be a leader or to take instructions from others. The studies could be a career playground if only you approach them like this.

MAKING AN IMPACT IN THE TIME OF DEFICIENCIES

The difference between some engineering or – say – economy or psychology studies and liberal arts programmes like the one you are in, lays in the approach to the social and cultural reality. Engineers learn to influence the reality by adjusting it to the people's needs. The economists typically think about maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs. Psychologists treat people and solve their personal problems. We are here to... make an impact on people, societies, cultures.

We want you to be a good observer of the reality, a great researcher of culture and society. Yet at the same time, we are not after unconditional development or constant correction of life. You are trained to take a critical look at things and ponder upon them (using scientific methods and your social imagination).

It will be very obvious to you after several theory classes – or most probably it is already evident to you – that we live in the time of severe deficiencies, acute inequalities and after the extreme 20th century of terrible terror and unprecedented prosperity we arrived at the point when we – the human societies – have to be very careful not to cross the edge. Biodiversity, ecological and climate stability, fake news, information overload, global inequalities, veiled racism, ethnocentrism and experiments with state and corporate surveillance – language issues, cultural issues, social issues – all of these make up the critical times we live in. Our programmes aim to prepare you to make an impact – to think in a sustainable, global, responsible and inclusive way.

USING SCIENTIFIC METHODS TO SOLVE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

Like many other people who address and solve different problems, we follow certain procedures. Academic way of dealing with things is based on the scientific method. It is built not only on the procedures set once and forever, but on the idea of intersubjectivity, peer review and transparency. The decisions we make – empirical or analytical – are not only responsible, smart and practical, but also justified and well communicated to others.

Humanities study programmes are founded on the idea of public science. We are here to inquire and make an impact. We are here to ask questions and involve people in the process. There are many ways to develop an understanding of social and cultural reality. One can believe in things unconditionally, one can imagine or dream about things, and finally, one can methodically study them. The goal is to understand and be able to act upon this understanding. In practical terms, think of practical, real-life problems as if they were subjects of your study: review the literature, design the research project, use the theories, define the population, sample the material, apply an appropriate analytical strategy, draw conclusions, write up recommendations.

MAINTAINING SELF BRAND AND BUILDING THE PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO

So, you are well equipped with language, cultural and social sensitivity and range of scientific methodologies. You know what you want to do and what you want to get. Or not. In either case – it may be a good idea to establish yourself as an emerging intellectualist and researcher. There are several ways to build up your reputation and maintain it.

First, you need a content: your achievements, knowledge and skills (especially the ones that are verified by someone reliable). The skills and knowledge can be learned at the university and your grades and diploma can testify for you. But there are many skills that can be obtained elsewhere during your studies. The university offers certified external trainings . Also, your actions and projects speak for you and what you are capable of. Participating in research projects, going to conferences, student mobilities, summer schools – these are achievements that add up to your personal portfolio. Last but not least, the output of your research and other activity is a testimony of what you can do.

The next step is to collect and store information about you – the academic machine. Curriculum Vitae is the most basic of devices. There are many tools and templates for CVs. [Europass](#) being the industry standard in Europe. Build your own and learn what categories of skills are to be listed. A step forward would be to maintain a professional profile online. There are many (not really) social networking sites where you are most probably active – think about using it as your professional self-branding device (but be careful with the public/private balance). There are also professional networking sites like LinkedIn, or Golden Line. Other social media presence, like blogging, vlogging or critical instagramming – among many others – may be a good idea to show your professional activity to people who might want to connect to you, hire you or simply do some background check during your recruitment process. A personal website would be another platform for self-representation, but being open-ended and not pre-structured like social networking sites, it is tricky, time consuming and must be updated with content once in a while.

Start from the simple acts of enhancing your public persona – be nice, remember to introduce yourself and use the affiliation of the University of Opole. An email address (both private for public purposes and the university one) as well as a template signature might be a nice starting point into a sustainable self-branding.

NETWORKING OR THE STRENGTH OF THE WEAK TIES

Your stay at the university is also a unique period of your life trajectory. This is an opportunity to meet so many new and interesting people. Be it your classmates, the faculty, but also other students who study long and short-term at the University of Opole. Make sure to connect not only socially (which is obviously nice) but also intellectually and professionally. Think, talk, organize and act together. This may be an interesting warm up to future group or network projects.

Also students mobilities, projects, international conferences and seminars are a great opportunity to make connections. We do not urge you to treat other human beings as resources – but it is a good idea to realize the human and social potential among your acquaintances and act together with them or mobilize them when the time comes.

Many of these ‘weak ties’, not only strong friendships, can turn out to be beneficial at some point of your career. Coming from different countries and going to different places, having different interests and their own social networks – they can turn out to be very valuable connectors to new jobs, projects and opportunities. The people you know very well and those who are with you all the time – are by all means valuable and you should cherish your human relations of course – but they know what you know, they have access to jobs and opportunities, you are likely to know about. With your summer school or research project mates from back in the day – it is a different story.

Enrolling in and belonging to organizations is another good way to build your social capital. There are student organizations at the university, there are NGOs and other groups in the city. Not only will it let you build new valuable connections, but also empower you to act as a group and not only as an individual.

USING THE UNIVERSITY RESOURCES TO GET PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:**COMPOSING AND CREATING**

Writing is your most basic professional device. Be it an email, social media post, essay, summary, report, grant proposal, thesis – these constitute the basic toolkit for your academic work and in the near future, in your professional life. Learn to write during your studies, use the expertise and reviews of your professors to excel.

There are other skills, the scientific, critical insight being the major one. We teach to look beyond the obvious, beyond the first assumption – learn that and you will be ahead of many others who just follow the social scripts.

Identify the skills you want to get, find out what you are good at and what your weak sides are. Use the coursework and select speciality subjects so that they contribute to your conscious development.

Create opportunities for yourself – come up with a project, connect to local communities and networks. You are not just the next person, you are a student of the University of Opole – you can get a recommendation letter from a professor, you can use your affiliation to make people listen to your ideas.

Being a student, you are in possession of certain knowledge, skills and experience from your previous education. Use it to develop your trans-humanities base. Read on your own, outside of the assigned bibliography. Do not be shy to ask your professors for recommendations. Debate, talk, discuss, question. The faculty is here to handle your stubbornness – in fact we are striving to be inspired or challenged.

Going to conferences is an ultimate academic professional experience. Our Master’s programmes are designed to support you to confront the conference reality. From responding to a call, preparing a paper and actual public presentation. It will prepare you to get this first professional experience in the wilds of academia.

A WORD ABOUT AN ACADEMIC CAREER

Now, many of students joining international study programmes at the graduate level ask themselves, will I make a nice academic? Teaching, conducting research, presenting the data and commenting on issues are appealing to many. Let us warn you, an academic career can be also appalling to some. It takes a lot of effort, dedication and sacrifice. You trade the intellectual freedom for academic slavery. Students to teach, reviewers to please, administrators to report to. It is a lovely job, but unstructured, with movable working hours (in practice all possible hours outside of the sleeping time) requires a lot of responsibility, self-efficiency and discipline. It is tough and yet rewarding.

Another important issue is – it is a highly competitive world with a relatively low return. And it is extremely hard to get a job. Getting your PhD will in most cases delay the actual launch of your professional career – and it may come at a cost of your personal life. The bottom line is – it is a great job, but it comes with a price. Think about it and perhaps prepare a backup plan once you decide to go for it.

THE LOGIC OF GRANT WRITING (AND PROJECT BASED WORK)

We already established that writing in general is the flesh and blood of a modern intellectual like yourself – a student of humanities. The grant proposal writing might be your bread and butter of your creative work in the future. The type of skills you are getting in your study programme may put you in public sectors whether governmental or non-governmental that may rely on grants. It means you will have to invest your creativity, combine it with rigorous methodical design and realistic scheduling and budgeting. You will have to convince the committees that your idea is coherent, based on preceding research and available data or current theoretical concepts. These are the skills we teach you throughout the programme. Do not underestimate them.

The logic of grant or project work is different to the day-to-day activity in the classroom or at the office. It requires good planning and orientation towards tasks, milestones and goals. Good projects also involve evaluation – because the grant givers will want to make sure their resources are spent in an effective way. The best way to learn how to write a grant proposal and manage a project is to... apply for one during your studies. The faculty will be more than happy to help. We are experienced, because all the funds for our research come exactly from these kind of sources.

When looking for grant proposal calls, make sure you understand who is the target group. Sometimes there are calls for individuals, sometimes for university students and sometimes you have to be associated (either in NGO or affiliated with the university).

THE RESEARCH PROJECT: THE GATEWAY TO THE LABOR MARKET

It might be a nice idea to converge your professional plans with your academic ambitions. The BA diploma paper or Master's thesis can be a basic research, but it can also be an applied solution. Either way, it is a thorough inspection into a section of reality you are interested in. Thinking seriously about your future career, it is worth considering the field and the topic of study relevant to the field or theme you would like your future job to be connected to.

Not only will it make you enjoy your research work but also it will help you immerse in the topic and produce convincing evidence for your future employers that you have mastered the topic. Working with the particular research theme, research subjects, stakeholders, communities etc. will very likely connect you to important figures in the field in question. It will also help you realize the mechanisms, rules and tricks of the trade. Sometimes, this approach can help you re-evaluate your idea about the organizations, institutions and generally the reality of the field. Maybe your dream job is all about things you imagined completely differently.

Not only the topic, but also the methodology of your work can be relevant to your future occupation. Excel in what you like doing, be it quantitative analysis, action research or theoretical studies. Think about your research project as your ultimate reference letter: it will speak about your skills and organizational efficiency. If your research project conducted in order to get a diploma is a professional, self-contained, convincing piece of intellectual craftsmanship, you are very likely to carry out similar projects like this.

It may be convincing to put on the recruiter's table a nicely written, coherent, convincing, interesting and relevant piece of work that will testify for your skills, sensitivity or imagination. It may be pivotal for you to engage with the field you are interested in. It might be essential for you to decide, which field exactly that could be.

MAINTAINING A SCHOLARLY MINDSET

Whatever you plan, whatever turns out, there is a legacy we hope would remain relevant to you. First of all, you are a proud daughter or a son of academia. This means, you are not only a civilized, respectful and reliable person, but your actions are driven by the scientific method. You are a critical, thinking, empathic, transparent and always doubtful person, who cannot be blinded by any ideology. You systematically question tacit assumptions, and unjustified conclusions. You cherish evidence based actions and look up to colleagues' expertise always leaving a room for error.

A humanities scholar is never dogmatic and pays a great deal of attention to the potential of intersubjectivity of the scientific community. You are a person who can criticise your own work first and then the work of others, being both methodologically suspicious and open minded.

Last but not least, you know how to communicate complex logic of sound, scientific inquiry to the general public. You realize the need of academia to engage with the general public. It is never easy; it might be rarely popular, but we hope you will share our passion for understanding the difficult and explaining the complex.

After all, you represent the group of your colleagues, your professors and yourself too. We want you to realize your status, your heritage and your position. Being a free range intellectual and a Bachelor or a Master of Arts is a huge responsibility. We would be glad if you could ponder upon this.