

CHAPTER 20

Careers in criminal justice

Learning outcomes

- **LO 20.1** Identify the range of career options available in the field of criminal justice.
- **LO 20.2** Describe the importance of generic skills to a career in criminal justice.
- **LO 20.3** Recognise the importance of personal responsibility in developing a career.

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This chapter has been written for students who are looking for information about the types of careers available in criminal justice and want advice on strategies to obtain employment. The primary aims are to provide you with the stimulus for thinking about varied opportunities that you can pursue and ways you can develop the best profile to be competitive when submitting a job application.

A **career** involves the long-term development of skills and responsibilities. A successful career develops from initial areas of interest that are usually already present when you commence your study program. These interests normally develop into specific preferences as your studies progress and your awareness grows about new possibilities. Career planning should therefore be approached with an 'end in mind' that reflects your personal values and judgements about the directions that are likely to be most fruitful, rather than with an 'end in view', which can sometimes be too restricting (Schön 1983). It is particularly important to have an open mind in regard to criminal justice because it is such a complex and evolving field, with numerous pathways into work and hidden career opportunities. Ultimately, your future career

decisions will be influenced by your personal qualities and the nature of the opportunities that present themselves. A career *emerges* as the sum of the decisions made and opportunities that open up which might never have been dreamed of at the beginning.

Employment in criminal justice

Employment in criminal justice is extremely diverse (Scott Harr & Hess 2010). In most jurisdictions, there is no single large employer, or even specific grouping. The largest employers are police and corrective services, but in Australia there are eight of these main departments, organised primarily along state and territory lines (see Chapter 15). 'Policing' and 'corrections' also include specialist agencies—for example, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission or various youth detention facilities run by state welfare departments. Beyond these larger clusters there is an enormous range of smaller employers in criminal justice, in government and non-government sectors, which cover a much wider range of types of work.

Another characteristic of this occupational area is the fragmented recruitment system. Individual employers advertise and recruit using different selection criteria and application processes, different advertising schedules and differing recruitment rounds. Some have very regular recruiting rounds, especially the police, who often have several intakes a year on fixed schedules. But most employers recruit on an ad hoc basis and recruitment schedules are usually not sequenced into the semester program of colleges and universities. The timeframes of recruitment processes are also highly variable. Some applicants might be asked to start work within several days of applying and being interviewed. In other cases—especially the police, who have numerous tests and checks—it can take up to six months.

Social and political crises can also lead to the restructuring of criminal justice sectors or to increased demand for different skill groups. For example, inquiries into child abuse have led to a significant increase in the number of positions available in child protection. Dissatisfaction with a simple punishment model of criminal justice has led to the creation of new jobs in victim–offender mediation and community conferencing. The victims' rights movement has led to positions in court support services for witnesses and victims (see Chapter 18). In the late 1990s, employment in federal law enforcement had almost dried up until the terrorism crisis at the turn of the century and regional instability stimulated a recruitment drive (Prenzler & Sarre 2006).

Career flexibility is another important characteristic of the field. Criminal justice professionals are generally not locked into a narrow job for life. For example, experience as a police officer provides an extremely valuable base for entry into a large number of areas of work outside conventional police departments, including security, intelligence and training. Adding detective work to general duties police experience greatly enlarges these options, such as private inquiry work for law companies, as an investigator in a white-collar crime agency like the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (see below) or as an investigator

BOX 20.1 Generic roles in criminal justice

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| Adjudication | Guarding | Supervision | Planning |
| Administration | Investigations | Support | Policy |
| Advocacy | Management | Therapy | Prosecutions |
| Defence | Mediation | Training | Research |

or manager in a child protection agency. Working as an assessment officer in, for example, child protection or workers' compensation, can lead to options in policy development, staff management and training.

Types of work

Employment in criminal justice can be thought of in a variety of ways. One way is **generic roles**—broad functions and tasks that are undertaken across a variety of agencies, both government and non-government. These are set out in Box 20.1.

Another way is with reference to specific positions or tasks within generic organisations. The core criminal justice system contains a range of such positions. The main traditional positions are listed in Table 20.1, but there are also numerous other positions within the system. In policing, there are substantial numbers of jobs for unsworn or civilian staff, who work alongside sworn officers. These include crime intelligence analysts, lawyers and call-centre staff. There are also community police officers, who wear a uniform and hold part-police powers. The courts employ marshals to keep order and transport prisoners, as well as translators, court reporters, judges' assistants, domestic violence or youth support officers, mediators and community conference coordinators. Courts also engage 'process servers' who have to find people required to appear in court and hand them court documents. Corrective services employ counsellors, teachers and health professionals to work with offenders. There is also an important position in prisons known as 'unit manager'—many modern prisons are built around a unit system for small groups of inmates, and unit managers oversee all aspects of the welfare and security of a group.

TABLE
20.1

Key tasks in the core criminal justice system

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Police | Patrol officer, detective, specialist officer (traffic, water, juveniles, dog squad, internal investigations, forensics and so on) |
| Courts | Prosecutor, defender (public/private), judge/magistrate, administrator |
| Corrections | Custodial officer, probation and parole officer, counsellor |

Additionally, there is the much wider field of employment (or self-employment) encompassing all people involved in law enforcement and crime prevention. Some specific jobs here include:

- loss prevention officer/security officer
- crowd controller
- security manager/security consultant
- private or in-house investigator
- forensic scientist/forensic laboratory staff
- forensic psychologist
- ministerial policy adviser
- insurance claims investigator
- customs officer
- youth worker
- drugs counsellor
- therapist.

Large organisations with a direct role in criminal justice also engage a host of ancillary employees. Larger police, corrections and justice departments usually include the following staff:

- publicity officers in external relations
- museum curators
- academy teachers
- research and policy officers
- human resource management personnel with specialisations in:
 - workplace health and safety
 - psychological test administration
 - industrial relations
 - equity.

Non-mainstream employers

Apart from the 'big three'—police, the courts and corrections—there are other agencies either directly involved in law enforcement or with substantial internal crime prevention functions. Additionally, numerous jobs are available to criminal justice graduates within the private sector (Tripp & Cobkit 2013). Those directly involved include:

- anti-corruption agencies
- 'regulators' (see Chapter 7 on white-collar crime) such as:
 - environmental protection agencies
 - workplace health and safety agencies
 - state and federal consumer protection agencies
- private security companies
- child protection agencies.

A number of sectors are more indirectly involved in law enforcement and crime prevention. Examples include:

- welfare agencies that employ youth workers, project officers, front-line workers with the homeless, and others at the interface between welfare and criminal justice
- large retail chains with loss prevention staff
- shopping centres with concerns for public order and theft
- road transport authorities responsible for crash prevention
- financial institutions and insurance companies concerned with preventing fraud and theft
- defence forces, which employ military police and have security responsibilities for high-risk equipment and facilities
- educational institutions that face a wide range of crime threats including violence, theft, motor vehicle theft, vandalism and arson
- public transport networks, especially rail and air, which need to protect commuters and infrastructure
- local government, which is increasingly interested in public order and personal safety issues, especially in open public spaces
- human rights and equity agencies involved in compliance monitoring and enforcement of equity legislation
- national security agencies that engage in intelligence gathering, covert surveillance and risk assessments
- charities or non-government organisations (NGOs) involved in victim support, advocacy and lobbying for law reform.

A sample of non-mainstream employers

The following section outlines a small sample of potential employers in order to encourage readers to think broadly about non-mainstream employment opportunities. Many of these agencies, like many government and non-government employers, operate graduate recruitment and Indigenous recruitment programs.

Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)

ASIC is Australia's peak corporate regulator, responsible for major fraud prevention and compliance with business operating standards. ASIC employs approximately 1600 people and has offices in all state and territory capitals (Australian Securities and Investments Commission 2017).

Australian Department of Human Services

The department provides a range of welfare services, employing nearly 35 000 staff. It distributes approximately \$114.4 billion each year in payments designed to assist families and support those with a disability, those who care for others, older Australians and those seeking employment or studying. The department has a strong focus on protecting the integrity of the welfare system and applies compliance and fraud prevention measures (Department of Human Services 2017).

Western Australian Corruption and Crime Commission

The 'Triple C' is responsible for the prevention of corruption across the public sector in Western Australia. It has a major role in overseeing the investigation and resolution of complaints and other indicators of misconduct, and undertakes its own inquiries with a range of significant powers. It has a staff of 121 (Corruption and Crime Commission 2017).

Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

One of the department's key purposes is to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect. It has offices covering the whole of Queensland, with a total of 5918 full-time equivalent staff—4.3% of whom are Indigenous, 3.7% have a disability, 12% are from a non-English-speaking background and 77.8% are female (Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services 2017).

Sample agencies and sectors: personnel profile

Tables 20.2–20.4 provide personnel statistics from two employers and one industry sector. The data give some indication of different positions available and promotion opportunities offered within hierarchical organisations. The occupations in Table 20.4 cover most security positions and the number of people involved by their 'main occupation', according to the Census. Security work also provides a wide range of part-time opportunities (Scott Harr & Hess 2010, Section 1.4). Note that almost all security providers in Australia need a licence, which is state-based with a short certificate course as a precondition.

Pathways into employment in criminal justice

Because criminal justice employment is diverse, the pathways from study into employment are also diverse. Here, we could contrast criminal justice with other fields such as teaching and nursing: a large proportion of graduates in these fields go directly into state government

| New South Wales Police staff profile, 2016–17 | |
|--|--------|
| Total staff | 20 667 |
| Non-sworn administrative officers | 4 018 |
| Police officers | 16 649 |
| Executive officers | 18 |
| Commissioner officers (superintendents and inspectors) | 904 |
| Senior sergeants and sergeants | 3 131 |
| Senior constables, constables and probationary constables | 12 596 |

Source: New South Wales Police (2017), p. 83.

TABLE
20.2

TABLE
20.3**Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection staff profile, 2016–17**

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Total permanent staff | 13 087 |
| Females | 54% |
| Males | 46% |
| Graduate trainees and cadets | 174 |
| Australian Public Service (APS) level 1 | 22 |
| APS level 2 | 32 |
| APS level 3 | 2573 |
| APS level 4 | 1706 |
| APS level 5 | 2748 |
| APS level 6 | 2883 |
| Executive levels 1–2 | 2780 |
| Senior executive service bands 1–3 | 168 |
| APS salaries levels 1–6 | \$4382–\$118 000 |
| Executive salaries levels 1–2 | \$9280–\$258 506 |
| Senior executive salaries bands 1–3 | \$16 554–\$331 600 |

Source: Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection Service (2017), pp. 225, 226 and 234.

TABLE
20.4**Security industry by category, 2016**

| | |
|---|-------|
| Private investigator | 701 |
| Security consultant | 1090 |
| Locksmith | 2557 |
| Insurance investigator | 421 |
| Debt collector | 7454 |
| Court bailiff or sheriff | 602 |
| Security officer | 39855 |
| Armoured car escort | 572 |
| Alarm, security or surveillance monitor | 908 |
| Crowd controller | 593 |

Source: © Commonwealth of Australia. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, *Census of Population and Housing, Community Profile, DataPack and TableBuilder Templates, Australia*, cat. no. 2079.0.

departments. These employers—departments of education and health—usually liaise with training providers and schedule interviews after graduations have been finalised. The study curriculum is also usually approved by the employers. Criminal justice is almost entirely opposite to this, except in a few cases where there are formalised relations between police and universities, as in New South Wales and Western Australia (New South Wales Police 2018, Western Australia Police 2019). In these cases, students are generally preselected for recruitment subject to satisfactory completion of university-based studies. Figure 20.1 sets out the main pathways that students are likely to take into criminal justice, with examples of the types of jobs involved.

A second degree (or ‘double degree’ through a compressed joint program) can dramatically enhance a graduate’s options and long-term career prospects. A grouping of subjects or ‘major’—such as communications or human services—within a criminology degree can also lead to particular specialist positions, such as a cadet journalist on the crime beat or a welfare officer in a juvenile correctional facility.

Another pathway to keep in mind is pre-graduation employment, as indicated in Figure 20.1, where a student satisfies selection criteria without completing a qualification. This has the advantage of early entry into employment, and thereby potentially into the housing

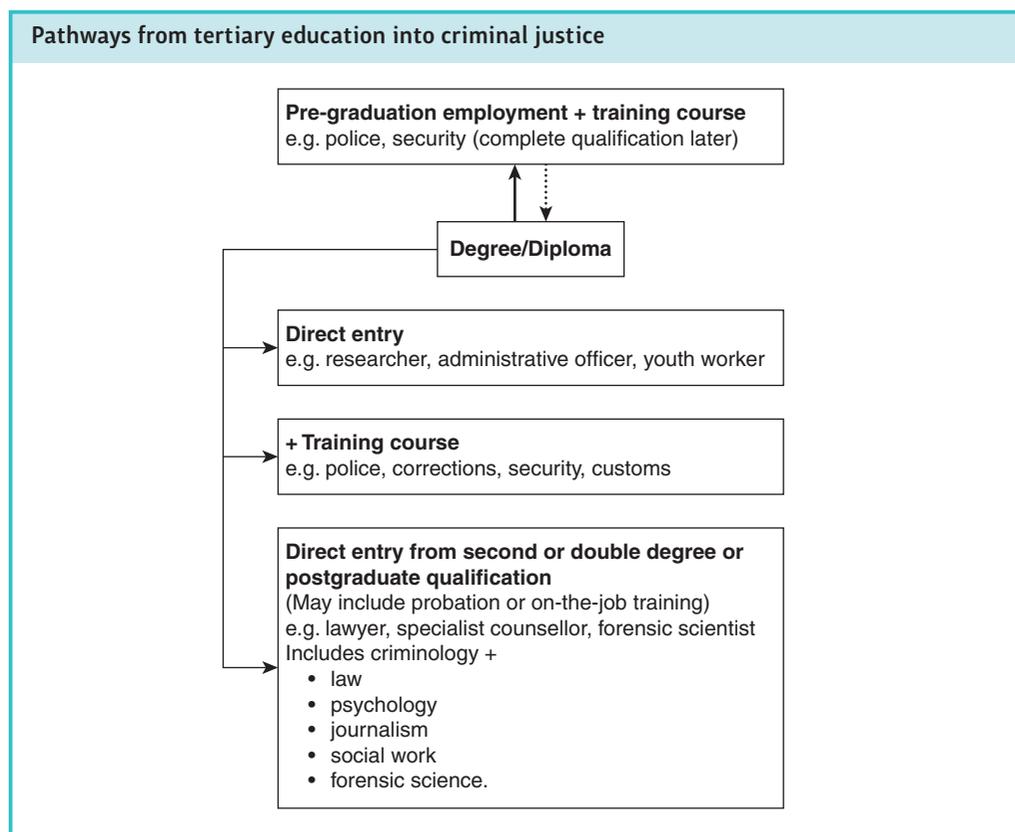


FIGURE 20.1

market, a better car and so on! However, for long-term career flexibility, as well as personal reasons, it is advisable to complete the degree in the long term. The best option is likely to be deferring for a period and then resuming studies part-time and external or at night.

Pathways and further study

Undergraduate students are often unaware of further study opportunities and where they lead. These study programs are generally referred to as 'postgraduate' (see Figure 20.1). For example, most universities offer an Honours program, which is normally an intensive year of study, including advanced research methods courses and a large independent research project. The Honours level provides advanced knowledge and skills of value for progressive managers. It is also a qualification for employment in research and policy units within criminal justice organisations, as well as being the main gateway to a PhD. A PhD is usually essential for tenure as a criminologist in a university. A coursework Master's degree of two years is generally seen more as a professional qualification for career advancement (not an entry point to a PhD and university employment).

Case studies

Case studies 20.1–20.3 show how, for three different graduates, particular careers have changed, grown and developed. Each of these graduates continues using and extending **generic skills**, and they have all been able to take the initiative and capitalise on opportunities that present themselves in different ways. Generic skills relate to general abilities beyond a specific subject area. These include self-discipline, timeliness and critical thinking, but are often focused on skills required to work effectively with other people, such as communication and empathy.



CASE STUDY 20.1

Lina, the community safety officer

I am the community safety officer responsible for strategic planning and policy development in areas such as sharps management, graffiti management and Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED) for a large semi-urban shire council. I also provide training for council staff, community awareness and engagement campaigns (on a range of issues), and conduct safety audits. I am responsible for my own annual budget and I am required to present reports and policies to the council on a regular basis.

After graduating I worked part-time as a research assistant in a university, and also gained part-time employment as a course facilitator at an Education Centre where I did my field placement. After about five months I gained employment with the state railways as a safety and security analyst and stayed there for about two years.

One of the most nerve-wracking things I have ever done was in my current position when I presented my first report to council. Although it was scary, I felt incredibly proud when the report was passed through council with little question or objection, especially when I was told by the CEO

continues

Lina, the community safety officer (continued)

CASE STUDY
20.1

and the mayor that it was wonderful and that I had done really well! I was thrilled that all of my hard work had paid off and that my first report had been recognised by people in positions of authority ...

I think my studies have assisted me in gaining each of my positions and all employers have commented on the benefit of having a behavioural science degree as this is a great combination with criminology. My undergraduate course provided me with a great snapshot of the different career paths that are available and helped me to gain a solid knowledge base across all areas. I feel competent to tackle a number of tasks and this has allowed me to advance my career.

Jade, the intelligence analyst



CASE STUDY
20.2

I am an assistant intelligence analyst, responsible for completing strategic and operational tasks for an anti-corruption agency. The intelligence process involves gathering raw data and adding value to it in a way that assists or provides new information to the clients and stakeholders. I regularly assist other analysts, police officers and investigators through products I create.

While studying, I was involved in my university's criminology student society. I first joined as a student member and attended a number of activities including prison tours, networking nights and the annual ball. I met so many great people that I wanted to get even more involved and I eventually became an executive member. I was on this committee for almost my entire time at university. I got to know my peers and lecturers plus I was given so many great opportunities to attend conferences and networking events. (I even got to see President Barack Obama speak!) This role was not only fun but really helped me hone my time management skills, and boost my confidence with public speaking and meeting new people.

In the final year of my degree I was given the opportunity to take part in a work placement course and was placed at the Queensland Police Service. During this time I got to meet many senior members of staff, police officers and other university students. This experience gave me my first real 'taste' of working in a law enforcement agency and I knew it was where I wanted to be. I used my placement as an opportunity to network with as many people as possible and as a result I got my first job after graduation within the same unit—thanks to a police officer passing my résumé onto a manager.

After graduating from university, I tried a number of different roles—some within agencies I expected, such as the Queensland Police Service, but also in organisations I didn't expect, specifically the Department of Health. I was given the opportunity to join a police unit based within the Department of Health, which involved an intelligence and release of information role working alongside a police officer. I used this opportunity in my career to learn as much as I could about police data systems, intelligence processes, legislation surrounding information releases and developing myself as a young professional. I made it my personal responsibility to get as much training as possible and ended up completing an intelligence course at the police academy. I had never previously thought about a career in intelligence but believed this was the area I could see myself working in for many years into the future.

After completing my academy training, I aimed to get a job within the intelligence field and completed multiple job applications for a number of organisations before I was successful in securing a spot at the anti-corruption agency. If it wasn't for my university studies, specifically taking part

continues

CASE STUDY
20.2**Jade, the intelligence analyst (continued)**

in a work placement, I don't think I'd be where I am today. Through the connections I made at my placement I was able to secure a job that I believe was the starting point of a lifelong career with law enforcement. My university experience greatly increased my confidence and showed me how many exciting and different opportunities there are for criminology graduates.

CASE STUDY
20.3**Robert, the evaluation manager**

I am the manager of evaluation for a significant state government project that has significant tourism and legacy implications. While my current role may not be directly related to criminal justice, I use the full range of skills that I developed during my studies including social science, research and project skills.

As part of my undergraduate degree, I completed a placement in a local government organisation within the community safety team. This placement was instrumental in my career. My placement project involved looking at crowding and safety issues within an entertainment precinct. Based on this project, which took place in the final year of my degree, the council funded my Honours research project. The completion of my Honours year, which is an additional year of advanced study, was the starting point of my career.

My Honours year was very different from the rest of my undergraduate degree. It was much more in line with what I do now in my career. There was the requirement for me to complete a task, my research project, but with far less structure. I needed to do something on my project every day which was a good way to build my skills.

During my seven years of working since graduation, I have worked on a large variety of projects. I started on a three-month temporary contract working in a child safety department. I was focused on the evaluation of a family support and early intervention program. After working in this area, I moved to a criminal justice research unit where I evaluated programs and provided research advice on youth justice and alcohol-related violence issues. This was a direct fit with the work that I had completed in my Honours year. I worked in this unit for a couple of years. I was then employed in a state government agency that was responsible for liquor and gaming regulation with a focus on responsible service of alcohol before moving to my current role as manager of evaluation. The key lesson here is that your career roles do not need to be limited by the subject matter. I am able to apply my skills in a range of environments.

Similarly, I've learnt that there are a range of generic skills required for successful employment. This includes being a team player and able to collaborate because whatever you do in your work will involve other people. If you cannot work with other people, you will not be successful. Additionally, clear and effective communication is critical. This includes communication with other people who you are working with as well as communicating to different audiences. This communication can be written or oral, require lots of detail or be brief dot points. You must be able to adapt your communication style to suit your audience. Finally, critical analysis is important. In your career, you can be given the bare bones of a task which you will then need to complete. This will involve identifying why you have been given the task, what are the issues that need to be addressed and what is the context of the task. You will receive and research information from a broad range of sources and you need to consider what particular agendas may be influencing their advice. This will ensure that you are as effective as possible in your work.

These three examples represent very different career pathways for criminal justice graduates. However, they all required an ability to take advantage of opportunities at a relatively low level in an organisation and then build on this experience and use the skills and knowledge gained in their degree to gradually take more control and achieve the levels and types of work that suited them best.

What is a career?

A job is often seen as a particular position, but a career involves a long-term commitment from a period of formal preparation and grows over a working life (DeLucia & Doyle 1990). Each area of employment can offer a wide range of working environments, all of which have their own sets of opportunities for learning and advancement. A few rules of thumb for thinking about a career include the following:

- 1 A career is no longer just a single job for the rest of your professional life. As society changes, new areas of opportunity open and old ones are modified. Each new job can build on the last and use skills already learnt.
- 2 The 'dream' job is usually reached by being willing to start outside your preferred area, starting at the bottom of an organisation and working determinedly to a plan.
- 3 No job is perfect. Paperwork, for example, can be tedious, but the whole system would quickly descend into chaos without it. We all have to adapt to tasks and routines that are not appealing, but that goes with every job. Unexpected changes and flat periods are also largely unavoidable in any career.
- 4 A college diploma or university degree will not have much meaning without the development of *praxis*: the 'theory-in-action' that constitutes professional practice (Schön 1983). Good managers use their skills as independent knowledge professionals to make improvements in their field.
- 5 Moving into specialist areas, or middle or upper-middle management, often requires additional study. This usually has to be done on a part-time basis outside work hours.

How to prepare for employment

Perhaps the best single piece of advice that can be given in this chapter is to begin preparing for future employment from the start of, or even before, your studies in order to improve your employability (Bates & Hayes, 2017). This should prevent a sudden crisis about how to get a job when graduating. You have to make yourself 'fit the job' you want. This means knowing the job you want, and carefully developing a profile of experience, skills and qualifications over a period of time. The information set out above about criminal justice organisations shows how the field covers a wide range of possibilities that all have different, if overlapping, skills. In order to secure that first position it is important to be able to articulate what you have learnt and relate it to the criteria in the position description. For example, it is no good deciding that a research job is what you want if you have not studied research methods. Applicants for policing or

corrections positions will have an advantage if they have completed units in these areas during their studies.

Despite the many daunting challenges and obstacles to employment in your preferred field, you can systematically make yourself highly employable by understanding the following:

- 1 Knowledge, commitment and intelligence are partly demonstrated by maintaining good grades. Poor results are not necessarily fatal, but too many will be a liability.
- 2 Many employers will expect references from lecturing staff. It is therefore a good idea to make yourself known to your teachers and impress them with your intelligence and maturity.
- 3 Take full advantage of careers counselling services that run careers fairs and provide employment skills workshops on campus. Workshops usually include résumé writing, interview techniques and job searching. Your department should also offer career information sessions and opportunities to meet professionals in criminal justice.
- 4 Being employable is partly demonstrated by an employment history. This does not need to be in criminal justice. A part-time job or holiday job, especially where you have to deal with people, can be invaluable in showing a potential employer that you have broad experience, skills and a 'work ethic'.
- 5 At the same time, take advantage of opportunities for practical experience in criminal justice while studying. This can be through work placement courses or internships. Also consider volunteering in areas related to criminal justice. These experiences can lead to valuable networks of mentors and potential referees.
- 6 You can also 'add value' to your academic profile with practical qualifications in areas such as typing, computer skills and first aid.

Job search skills

Unfortunately, jobs do not usually find you. You have to find the job. Being able to locate advertised positions or identify scheduled intakes—having **job search skills**—is therefore essential (Scott Harr & Hess 2010, Section 3). A good professional degree should give you a broad knowledge of employers in your field. Most of these agencies have websites with pages on employment opportunities, contact people, useful information about the mission and structure of the organisation, and the location of offices. At the same time, careers services workshops in job searching will help refine techniques for locating that crucial advertisement, usually in key national, state or local newspapers or on online careers listings. It is a good idea to start finding and monitoring these sources well before you want to start applying for jobs. This will give you confidence that you are covering the field and not missing any opportunities that arise. It will also give you a good idea of what sorts of jobs come up and the frequency over time, such as a full year.

It is also well known that not all vacancies are advertised publicly. There can be benefits therefore in making a direct approach to an employer, with a letter introducing yourself, summarising your skills and interests, with a résumé attached, and indicating your availability for an interview.

Application skills

Employers frequently make a first cull of applications based on their quality. As a result, in order to obtain an interview you need to make an impression with a covering letter that succinctly outlines how your profile fits the job. Applications also usually require a résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) that is up-to-date and accurate. Different organisations sometimes have particular requirements for résumés, but generally they should be no longer than three pages and include personal details, career goals, skills, education and qualifications, employment history, achievements and awards, community activities and referees. As noted, advertisements for professional positions usually have position descriptions and key selection criteria that need to be directly addressed by applicants. Doing this properly usually requires a significant amount of time. Criminal justice practitioners value generic skills such as verbal communication skills, good work ethic, good work habits and initiatives (Jones & Bonner 2016). Examples of ways you have demonstrated these skills in action are also usually required.

Keep in mind, too, that criminal justice recruitment processes can involve batteries of tough intelligence, mental health and honesty tests (Scott Harr & Hess 2010, Section 2). In particular, agencies are now keen to screen out people who are potential corruption risks. You may be asked personally challenging questions about drug use or crimes you may have committed, your financial status and recreational pursuits such as gambling. Some employers require health and physical competency tests, and some also engage in drug-testing. You can become familiar with some of these tests through your studies, and you should also attend any information or practice sessions that are made available by the employer to enhance your **application skills**.

Gaining the required generic skills and competencies

Each of us working in a profession needs to be able to describe what we do and what impact it has. This is about articulating a **professional practice framework** that includes our own personal abilities and style—for example, working well with people or working more on one's own; more a leader or more a team member. Most criminal justice professions deal with both perpetrators and victims of crime, and stereotypical and automatic responses are usually not appropriate in dealing with the often complex needs of these groups. It is therefore also important, for both job applications and promotion applications, to be able to articulate personal qualities of objectivity and ethical standards in dealing with clients, and colleagues. These need to be included along with more conventional generic skills—such as oral and written communication, constructive listening, public speaking, planning—that apply across specific types of work. These and more general qualities are set out in Box 20.2, along with questions that will help articulate these qualities in applications and interviews.

BOX 20.2 A checklist of generic skills

Interpersonal skills

Can you think of examples of situations in which you have become (1) assertive without being aggressive, (2) been able to listen accurately and effectively, and (3) assisted in the management of a particular conflict or helped somebody else resolve a problem?

Self-management

Have you been able to engage in an activity or task that you have found really challenging? Can you list examples of situations in which you became more self-aware, more able to organise yourself, more resourceful and more able to take responsibility?

Problem-solving, conceptual and analytical skills

Are you increasing your ability to solve problems and make independent decisions? Are you becoming better at critically analysing arguments and finding relevant information in particular situations? Have you been able to come up with any ideas that others have found helpful?

Oral and written communication

Are you getting better at explaining and presenting your ideas clearly and concisely? Have you taken the opportunity to conduct a presentation, develop a training session or be persuasive in a particular situation? Is the quality of your written documentation improving?

Group work and teamwork skills

Can you think of an example where you have been able to collaborate with others and work successfully as a member of a team? If so, have you been able to keep on task and motivate other members of the team?

Information technology and information literacy

Can you provide some examples that show you can access and evaluate a range of information sources? Can you use the Internet effectively? Are you becoming more comfortable using word processing, spreadsheet and database programs?

Community engagement

Have you been able to become involved in your community? Are you beginning to take an active interest in social issues?

Ethical competence

Can you identify difficult ethical decisions you have made in the workforce? What were the competing considerations? How did you resolve the issues and what made them wise decisions?

Personal effectiveness

Are you becoming more able to identify and articulate your own personal values? Are you able to make finer judgements about whether or not a particular action is appropriate? Are your lifestyle, work and personal relationships becoming more healthy and productive?

Professional effectiveness

Are you able to apply theory to particular problems? Are you becoming more able to identify and solve problems in the workplace (or learning environment), and measure improved productivity and effectiveness?

continues

BOX 20.2 A checklist of generic skills (continued)

Lifelong learner

Are you self-motivated to continue to engage in learning on an ongoing basis? Are you prepared to continue to engage in formal learning as well as informal or self-directed learning?

Source: Adapted from Crebert (2000).

Conclusion

As your studies progress you should become more acclimatised to the broad field of criminal justice, getting a 'feel' for the kind of jobs you might like to do in the future. You will then be able to choose particular areas to concentrate on as your undergraduate course proceeds. At the same time, if at all possible, try to obtain some experience of real-world criminal justice employment, for example through a work placement position or volunteering. It is also vital to develop job search and application skills, and cultivate generic work skills.

You have chosen a field of work which has an extraordinary breadth, one which reaches into all aspects of community life and demands high levels of ethical responsibility. The work, wherever you find it, will always be challenging and demanding and will require commitment and dedication. Professional work in criminal justice is essential for the wellbeing of communities and, without doubt, it will always be interesting and rewarding.

Key terms

application skills
career
generic roles

generic skills
job search skills

professional practice
framework

Questions

- 1 What generic skills do you believe you already have? How do these relate to generic skills required in criminal justice?
- 2 What kind of career is likely to be more suitable for *you*? Justify your answer with the kind of evidence you could supply in a job interview.
- 3 Construct an ideas map that includes the range of possible jobs you could do when you graduate. Keep your favourites near the centre and place other jobs further out according to your interests.
- 4  Choose one of the testimonials in Case studies 20.1–20.3 and list the steps involved in that person's career to date.

Recommended readings

Scott Harr & Hess (2010), *Careers in Criminal Justice and Related Fields: From Internship to Promotion*, is an easy-to-read and stimulating US text. Most of the general points are directly relevant to Australia.

Also peruse the websites of criminal justice employers. These usually contain information about recruitment. Annual reports provide information about an agency's activities.

Websites

The australia.gov.au website has information on Australian government departments that recruit graduates: <www.australia.gov.au>.

Seek is a good example of an online job search tool: <<https://seek.com.au>>.

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