GradPlanHQ

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING + PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

Practice before the opportunity depends on it.

The GradPlanHQ Student Guide

Build more than a degree.

The operating guide for students and members.

This guide helps you figure out where you are, use what you already have, build a personal strategy, and decide what to do next — and shows where tools, people, practice, structure, and support can help.

College looks different for everyone. Start with the experience, relationships, responsibilities, and resources you already have.

- The GradPlanHQ Growth Cycle™ — the repeating loop that moves your work forward; enter it anywhere
- Free Tools — open to everyone, for taking stock, building a strategy, and moving it forward
- Free Community — people, network, interaction, and information for college students and recent graduates
- Practice Field — subscription-based structure and support: focused working groups, Meetups, and Project Launcher Support & Meetups

Connect. Build. Grow. Repeat.

This guide is free to read. Begin at the level that fits where you are right now.

GOVERNING PROCESS

The GradPlanHQ Growth Cycle™

The governing process across all of GradPlanHQ, free and paid: a repeating loop for connecting goals with strategy, taking meaningful professional action, reflecting on what happened, and continuing from a stronger starting point. Enter wherever it makes sense; it isn't a required linear sequence.



Build can happen through professional practice, relationships, coursework, jobs, service, credentials, research, existing work, or projects. Enter the Growth Cycle wherever it makes sense for you.

START WITH THE FREE TOOLS

Use the Productivity Tools

Start where you are. Use what you already have. Build a strategy and take the next intentional step. The Productivity Tools are open to everyone — no email, account, or membership required. They help you notice where you're stuck, take stock of what you already have, build a personal strategy, and move it forward. The tools connect to the Growth Cycle. One tool may support more than one part, and you don't have to begin at Connect.

CONNECT — BUILD YOUR STRATEGY

Guide Quiz

Helps you identify where to focus first.

Personal Asset Inventory

Helps take stock of skills, experience, relationships, interests, knowledge, campus resources, community connections, and other assets you already have.

BUILD — PUT YOUR STRATEGY INTO ACTION

Student Planner

Shows you how to think through a student project from idea to action, then reflect, capture evidence, and communicate the experience afterward.

Framework Discovery

Connects classroom learning or professional frameworks to current or new projects so you can strengthen the work, discuss it with a professor or mentor, and build stronger professional language for explaining it later.

One-Page Project Brief

Organizes an early project idea into something concrete you can use to start a conversation with a professor, supervisor, mentor, or community partner and get help reviewing, questioning, or shaping the idea.

GROW — TURN EXPERIENCE INTO PROOF AND STORY

Framework Discovery

Helps you revisit completed work, recognize how you applied what you learned, and build stronger professional language for telling the story.

Visibility Plan

Helps establish an ongoing professional visibility practice.

Repeat means using what you've learned to continue useful relationships, improve or extend meaningful work, practice again, take greater responsibility, and identify your next strategic move.

A resource you already have access to is an asset.

Use the Personal Asset Inventory prompts to discover what your college offers and connect what fits to your strategy.

JOIN THE FREE COMMUNITY

The GradPlanHQ Community

The tools help you move your own progress forward. Adding people and a network can help you go farther. The Community is for college students and recent graduates. College students verify with a school email address, and recent graduates can use a verified LinkedIn profile. This helps create a trusted, lower-stakes place to practice, try things, learn, make mistakes, and build relationships.

Find your people

Use the member directory to discover members, exchange contact information or business cards, and find project partners, collaborators, or support.

Practice networking

Practice professional introductions, outreach, LinkedIn connection requests, follow-up, and other relationship-building behaviors.

Participate and contribute

Ask questions, share work and ideas, give and receive feedback, help other members, join discussions, and practice professional visibility.

Stay current

Find curated information, resources, and conversations that help you keep up with changing hiring practices and what matters for the work you're trying to move forward.

Joining the Community

- The Free Tools require no application. Joining the Free Community requires a member application and eligibility verification.
- The application starts the same process of taking stock: your current involvement, existing experience, what you hope to build, your goals, project interests, and community connections.
- What you share helps GradPlanHQ understand who is in the Community, improve connections among members, and shape resources, content, opportunities, and Community support around what members actually need.
- GradPlanHQ does not sell member data or allow member solicitation. Limited wall sponsorships may help support the Community and keep subscription fees lower.

THE COMMUNITY CREATES EXPERIENCE, TOO

Building a professional community creates real work.

Community needs can give you opportunities to apply what you're learning, practice professional skills, work with students from other fields, contribute to something real, and create proof of what you can do.

Your major can shape what you contribute without deciding your only role. You might contribute through research, communication, data analysis, design, technology, education, outreach, evaluation, storytelling, project coordination, resource mapping, or another area where your skills and interests fit the work.

One contribution can lead to another. You may begin with one piece of work, return to take on more responsibility, collaborate with other members, help expand the work, mentor someone coming behind you, or help hand the project forward.

THE PRACTICE FIELD

Know you procrastinate?

The Practice Field is designed to help you stay on track. The Practice Field is the subscription-based structured support layer within the GradPlanHQ Community App for students who need manageable next steps, live support, and accountability.

What the subscription adds.

Focused working groups, manageable next actions, recurring Action & Momentum Meetups, protected working time, relevant resources, members working on the same step, live support, feedback, accountability, repeated practice, and Project Launcher Support & Meetups.

GUIDED BY THE GRADPLANHQ GROWTH CYCLE™

Connect → Build → Grow → Repeat

The governing process across all of GradPlanHQ, free and paid.

THE GRADPLANHQ PRACTICE FIELD™

Subscription-based structured support within the GradPlanHQ Community App

Focused Working Groups

Build Your Brand · Create Experience · Tell Your Story

Dedicated feeds, resources, and calendars supporting your work between Meetups.

Action & Momentum Meetups

Networking practice · protected time · live support · repeated reps

Focused live online working sessions.

Project Launcher Support & Meetups

Focused live Meetup support, Community spaces, and resources for intentionally creating experience through a project.

resources · people working on the same step · feedback · accountability

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What repeated practice can build ↓

Experience | Proof | Relationships | Visibility

RECURRING PRACTICE

Three Processes You Keep Coming Back To

Build Your Brand, Create Experience, and Tell Your Story are three interconnected processes you'll return to throughout your career. The Practice Field breaks them into nine focused Meetup choices so you can work on the specific step you need now.

01–03

Build Your Brand

01 Identify Your Values, Interests, and Story.
02 Craft Your LinkedIn Bio and Profile.
03 Grow Your Online Presence and Network.

04–06

Create Experience

04 Create Projects to Develop Your Skills.
05 Turn Class Projects Into Work Experience.
06 Earn Credentials That Validate Your Skills.

07–09

Tell Your Story

07 Translate Skills to Your Résumé Effectively.
08 Build Impact Stories for Your Interviews.
09 Build Trust and Credibility via Your Socials.

Choose the Meetup that matches the task in front of you.

Work alongside other members focused on that same step, with protected working time, relevant resources, feedback, and live support. Focus on what you need, skip what you don't, and come back when you need another rep.

ACTION & MOMENTUM MEETUPS

Protected time. Support. Momentum.

Recurring Action & Momentum Meetups are the core live Practice Field support: focused practice, working time, feedback, accountability, and repeated reps. Members may ask questions, share progress, and move a next action forward. The Meetup provides a time and place to work. What happens during that time depends on the action each member takes.

0–10 min

Opening activity

A brief icebreaker or networking and professional-communication practice. Members may practice introductions or interact with other participants.

10–20 min

Set the task

Review the resources for the session, ask questions, and choose one action to work on.

20–50 min

Protected work time

Work independently or alongside other members. Breakout rooms remain optional.

50–60 min

Reflect and identify what comes next

Save the work completed, note what was learned, and choose what to do next.

Join in the way that fits

- “I have nothing to show yet.” You can begin by choosing one action to work on.
- “Breakout rooms sound intimidating.” They're optional. Plenty of members only ever use the icebreaker and the work time.
- “I can only make some sessions.” That works. The series repeats, so you can return any time without falling behind.

START WHERE YOU NEED TO

START WHERE YOU ARE. GROW INTO GREATER RESPONSIBILITY.

Your class year doesn’t decide where you start. Choose the level of responsibility that fits your experience and what you need to practice now.

PRACTICE → CONTRIBUTE → TAKE RESPONSIBILITY → LEAD

Practice

Get reps.

Practice the professional behaviors you'll use to pursue opportunities, succeed at work, and keep growing. Try, get feedback, adjust, and practice again.

Contribute

Put your skills and values into action.

Use your knowledge, effort, perspective, and strengths to help someone else and demonstrate what matters to you through what you do.

Take Responsibility

Build trust through follow-through.

Own work, communication, decisions, and results appropriate to the situation. Give people evidence of how you work and what they can rely on you for.

Increasing Responsibility / Leadership

Help others move forward.

Mentor, facilitate, share expertise, lead ongoing work, or train the next person. Build a reputation through what you consistently contribute while strengthening your Experience, Proof, Relationships, and Visibility.

Your class year, schedule, and circumstances don't decide where you start. Start with what you already have and what you need now. Working, commuting, learning online, caring for family, or balancing other responsibilities? Your work, life experience, relationships, and responsibilities can all be starting assets.

Already bringing professional experience?

You may be ready to help someone else practice. Mentor another member, help shape a student project, share professional perspective, make an introduction, or explore whether your workplace could support a student opportunity. These can also give you ways to practice mentoring, coordination, communication, leadership, and greater responsibility. Your experience can become someone else's starting asset, too.

PROJECT LAUNCHERS

Take your practice into the world.

Project Launchers give you structured places to start when you need experience but aren't sure what to create. Choose the Launcher that fits what you need now. Repeated experience can also prepare you to design increasingly independent opportunities on your own.

PeerTakes

Use your own experience to practice empathy leadership and help students coming behind you.

Use school, campus, or community connections to create a mentoring opportunity aimed at student engagement and success.

Practice: Communication · Empathy leadership · Storytelling · Mentoring · Active listening · Outreach · Networking · Relationship-building · Initiative · Follow-through

Teach It Back

Turn learning into practice and contribution.

Start with something you are learning through coursework, Academy learning, a credential, or another learning opportunity. Find an appropriate real assignment where you can apply it, then help someone else use what you learned.

Practice: Communication · Applied problem-solving · Initiative · Professional outreach · Teaching · Facilitation · Collaboration · Feedback · Follow-through

Community Asset Map

Turn outreach into relationships and community knowledge.

Connect with people and organizations to identify relationships, programs, resources, opportunities, and community assets while practicing professional outreach and networking.

What you learn can also give another student a better starting point: people to contact, needs to explore, possible partners, mentors, and projects.

Practice: Professional outreach · Networking · Active listening · Research · Communication · Relationship-building · Organization · Critical thinking · Follow-through

Design Your Own Experience

Intentionally design more independent opportunities on your own.

Use your goals, learning, assets, relationships, and growing experience to shape work around a real need or opportunity.

Practice: Strategic thinking · Judgment · Initiative · Problem-solving · Professional communication · Project management · Stakeholder communication · Negotiation · Ownership · Leadership

The free tools connect here

- Need help thinking through the project? Use the Student Planner.
- Want to connect classroom learning or a professional framework to the work? Use Framework Discovery.
- Ready to organize the idea for a professor, supervisor, mentor, or community partner to review and help shape? Use the One-Page Project Brief.
- Need inspiration? Explore Project Ideas or Volunteer Projects.

Project Launcher Support & Meetups help you line it up, do the work, follow through, capture the value, and practice telling the story.

START WHERE YOU NEED TO START. GROW INTO WHAT COMES NEXT.

The Launchers are not required steps. The opportunity is to practice how to create, navigate, and carry increasingly independent work.

GROW

Reflect · Capture · Amplify

This is a deeper look at the Grow part of the GradPlanHQ Growth Cycle™. Practice and action give you something real to reflect on. Reflecting and capturing help you recognize what you demonstrated, save useful evidence, and explain the experience clearly. Sharing the right work in the right places can help others see what you're learning, doing, and becoming known for.

Reflect

Understand what happened and what was learned.

Capture

Preserve useful work samples and artifacts when they exist.

Amplify

Share meaningful work appropriately when there is something worth sharing.

Challenge

What problem, need, or goal were you addressing?

Action

What did you personally do? What choices did you make?

Skills

What professional or transferable skills did you practice?

Values

What did the work show about what matters to you?

Impact

What changed, if anything? Who benefited? What useful artifact or detail exists?

Story

How can you accurately explain the work, contribution, decisions, adaptations, learning, and result?

Accurate beats inflated.

Not every activity produces a dramatic result. An accurate account of the work, decisions, adaptations, learning, and contribution is more credible than an inflated story. And not every professional rep needs to become résumé content.

Use the Visibility Plan to decide what is worth sharing, where to share it, and how to build professional visibility over time.

BUILD FROM WHAT YOU LEARNED

One experience can show you what you want to learn, practice, or strengthen next.

Connect coursework, Academy learning, professional frameworks, existing training, or a credential to the next Growth Cycle when it supports your strategy.

EXPERIENCE → LEARN → APPLY → GROW → REPEAT

Framework Discovery can help you connect professional ways of thinking to real work and apply what you learn to the next experience.

The goal is not to collect frameworks or credentials. It’s to become more capable of creating quality work and opportunities of your own.

START THIS SEMESTER

Start where you need to.

You don't need to follow a rigid checklist. Choose the starting point that fits what you're trying to move forward right now.

Not sure what deserves attention?

Try the Guide Quiz to identify where to focus first, or use the Personal Asset Inventory to take stock of existing skills, relationships, coursework, and experience.

Already working on something?

Use whichever Free Tool helps move the work forward. Framework Discovery can help connect what you're learning in class with current or completed work.

Need more experience?

Build from coursework, campus jobs, outside employment, community service, volunteering, leadership, credentials, research, or existing responsibilities—or intentionally design a project or practice experience when a specific gap exists.

Want people and connection?

College students and recent graduates can join the Free Community to meet people, share questions and work, practice networking, and build relationships.

Want structure, recurring practice, and feedback?

The Practice Field is the subscription-based structured support layer within the GradPlanHQ Community App for students who need manageable next steps, live support, and accountability. It adds focused working groups, Action & Momentum Meetups, resources, and Project Launcher Support & Meetups.

Ready for greater responsibility or leadership?

Mentor newer participants, facilitate working sessions, contribute specialized expertise, lead ongoing initiatives, or help train the next person while building your own Experience, Proof, Relationships, and Visibility.

Have experience worth capturing?

Reflect on what actually happened, capture useful evidence and artifacts when they exist, strengthen how you explain the work, and decide what to do next.

Recently graduated?

Keep practicing while you work toward what's next. Build relationships, strengthen your professional presence, create or capture current experience, and keep developing the professional behaviors you'll need to land a first professional role, move into a stronger role, or take on greater responsibility.

No required sequence. No mandatory tools. Enter the Growth Cycle anywhere that makes your next step easier.

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Connect. Build. Grow. Repeat.