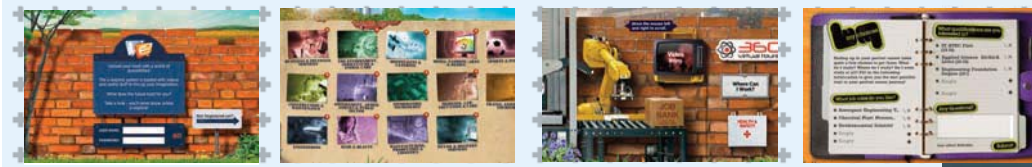




# U-Explore

**CONTACT:** U-EXPLORE.COM  
**REVIEWED BY:** JOHN DABELL



Motivated, Educated and Missing Out. That's how CompTIA, the non-profit trade association for the IT industry, describes many young people today. In 2011 CompTIA surveyed 1,000 students and found that 41% did not feel well informed about the range of careers open to them, whilst only 13% felt their education institutions had fully equipped them to make career decisions. Careers advice in schools in England is 'patchy and inconsistent' according to the Institute of Career Guidance. As a result, young people are missing out on opportunities, despite having the skills and ambitions employers want.

Things are looking up, however, now that U-Explore has produced an outstanding online teaching and learning resource that has the WOW factor by the bucketful; in fact, impartial careers education doesn't get much better than this.

U-Explore is stuffed with thousands of rich media and learning resources that pupils will find engaging and extremely informative. When you login you are taken to the main wall where you can start dipping your toes into any of the 14 industry sector tiles on offer. There are 5-minute video intros that set the scene for each sector, involving real people speaking about their jobs and what they enjoy. To find out more, you can enter the Job Bank, which contains over 1,000 written job profiles, detailing what is involved, the skills and qualities needed, qualifications required and progression routes, some of which have a

video case study of real life professionals talking frankly about what their work is really like (unfortunately, not every job has a video to go with it – hopefully others will be added as part of regular updating). Pupils could stay for hours in the Job Bank and it would be time well spent, learning about jobs they didn't even know existed, from colon hydrotherapist to wig maker or pyrotechnician to croupier. It makes a fine job of promoting equality of opportunity and challenging stereotypes, although devoted applications to these key areas could have been included to highlight their importance.

From here pupils can explore Where Could I Work? where they can access national and local businesses through text-based profiles and interactive 360-degree virtual tours, which are particularly useful for getting the feel and look of a working environment.

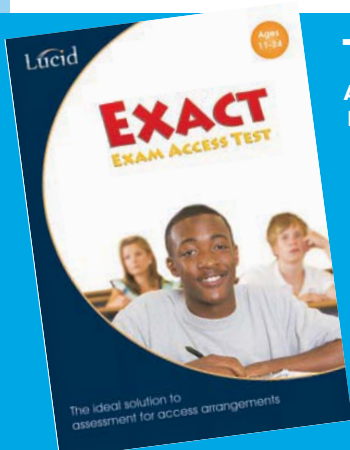
The My Options section offers impartial and independent support for helping pupils get to grips with the full range of qualifications and training they can opt for. There are options for 13-16, 16-18 and 18+ that go into a more in-depth look at the qualifications available at these key stages.

The Work Experience tile is a fantastic tool dedicated to help support young people apply for a work placement, guiding them through the application process step-by-step. There are loads of applications to help, with tips in letter writing, creating a CV, research, interview technique and making a good impression. The entrepreneur-led

Enterprise channel features reality-based video challenges set in the context of a genuine business where pupils learn about a whole host of activities from market research to financial planning. Once again, the 'real' people video chats and case studies are motivating and sure to engage.

And there's more. My Choices is an application that enables students to log their favourite job and qualification choices, which teachers can use to track the choices being made. You will also find an online magazine featuring short and inspiring success stories, other useful websites, health and safety information, and links to the top five searched for video profiles. In fact, there is so much to look at within U-Explore, it could be a bit overwhelming for pupils, so teacher guidance is essential.

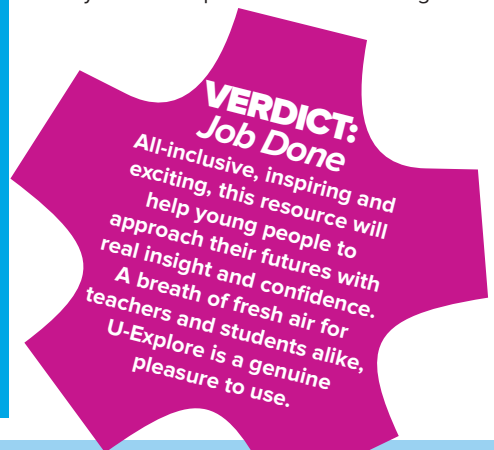
U-Explore cannot fail to help empower pupils and guide them to make canny choices and deft decisions so they become agile, adaptable and capable citizens. Is this resource the solution to schools and colleges 'statutory duty to provide careers education in the curriculum'? Yes, by a country mile. It is comprehensive, expertly designed, fresh and aspirational. Wave goodbye to the days when you filled in a questionnaire that told you that you were destined to be a dental hygienist when in actual fact you ended up as a snowboard designer.



## TESTING TIMES

Assessing students for exam access arrangements can be very time consuming. Lucid Exact is a suite of computerised tests of word recognition, reading comprehension, spelling, and handwriting/typing speeds that are easy to administer and save significant amounts of assessment time. Nationally standardised for ages 11 – 24 years, immediate results provide data for JCQ forms. There are two parallel forms of each test to allow for repeated assessment. Lucid Exact is available on a yearly licence with unlimited use for stand-alone computers at only £120, with network versions also available.

(Lucid Research, 01482 882121, lucid-research.com)



### VERDICT: Job Done

All-inclusive, inspiring and exciting, this resource will help young people to approach their futures with real insight and confidence. A breath of fresh air for teachers and students alike, U-Explore is a genuine pleasure to use.