



Making career decisions

INTRODUCTION

We are all individuals, and the decisions we make have to suit our individual personalities, needs and satisfactions. Whether you have given a lot of thought to your future career or not, this resource is designed to give you practical assistance in making your career choices. The golden rule is not to feel pressured into making a quick decision. Indeed, if you feel that you are under pressure it can actually be more difficult to sort out ideas in your own mind. Career decision making can be a slow process. Begin by trying a few constructive activities.

Whatever degree you have studied, you have an element of choice in the career that you follow. Initially, try not to say “what job can I do with this degree subject?” Instead try to start off by looking very broadly at a variety of jobs. Eventually, you will need to come back to your degree subject, but at first you need to be able to let your ideas run freely. You may well feel constrained if you limit your research to jobs that relate directly to your degree.

Making decisions

To make decisions, you need to know enough about the various possibilities. You probably would not choose between six different holidays without knowing something about all of them. The same applies to jobs. One person may love something that you would hate and vice versa, so you need to use any advice or information from others to form your own opinions. Allow yourself some time each week to devote to career activities. Timetable it if you can.

Start your research with “you”. Find out more about who you are and what you have to offer. This exercise does involve some work, but after a number of years of study, you are no doubt familiar with the link between doing the background work/research and results! If you spend time on this you will discover a lot of new things about yourself, or remember things you had forgotten. Writing things down is an important part of the decision making process.

Self-assessment

Begin your [self-assessment](#) by considering:

Your achievements
Your interests

Your skills and abilities
Any known disabilities

Your personal values
Personal and family circumstances

Achievements

Reflect on your achievements – the easiest way to start is with your academic achievements at school or at university. In many situations, particularly for new graduates with little or no work experience, it is important to go back to school days. Some employers feel quite strongly that a pattern of achievement at that stage is likely to be repeated in later years.



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You can also develop specific vocational skills through campus activities. Such activities may include helping run student media, organising and chairing meetings, persuading people to join in activities and tutoring. Part-time work to support yourself financially, from waiting tables (tact, energy, carrying out requests correctly) to working in a shop (always valuable if you hope to go into marketing or indeed into any work where you have to deal with clients regularly) to data entry (accuracy, an eye for detail) and so on also provides valuable work experience. All activities say something about you and they differentiate you from your peers.

Further skills and experiences developed at University:

A: Information management skills:

Sorting and evaluating data

Applying information creatively to specific problems or tasks

Organising information effectively

Compiling and ranking information

Synthesising facts, concepts and principles

B: Design and planning skills:

Identifying alternative courses of action

Following through with a plan or decision

Predicting future trends and patterns

Making and keep a schedule

Setting realistic goals

Managing time effectively

Accommodating multiple demands

Setting priorities

C: Research and investigation skills:

Using a variety of sources for information

Identifying problems and needs

Conveying a positive image to others

Applying a variety of methods

Using audio-visual formats to present ideas

Developing effective listening skills

D: Communication skills:

Using various forms and styles of written communication

Using audio-visual formats to present ideas

Developing effective listening skills

Speaking effectively

Conveying a positive image to others



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I: Generic skills:

Comprehending written material

Active listening

Identifying problem areas

Developing alternative approaches to problems

Using library and research facilities

Co-operating with a work team

Helping people with their problems

Following well-defined instructions

Establishing goals and following through

Relating to a wide variety of people

Writing effectively

Making effective speeches/presentations

Decision making

Analysing and evaluating ideas

Supervising and leading

Persuading others to accept your ideas

Organising time effectively

Working on projects

Undertaking detailed and accurate work

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