CHOOSING CAREER GOALS

Feeling unsure about your career direction and what to do after your degree is something many university students can experience at any stage of their degree. How do you decide?

The purpose of this handout is to provide you with a structured process to follow when reflecting on, and seeking to identify your career interests. There are many factors that influence career decisions and this handout provides a place from which to start.

These are not overnight decisions and you need to take time to explore and weigh up your options. The decision is up to YOU, and must reflect your interests, talents, experience, training, education, skills, values and knowledge. Think about your needs and what you would like to do.

STEP ONE: DO YOUR SELF-ASSESSMENT

Trying to decide on careers and courses without having done some self-assessment is like navigating without a map – there are so many possible directions in which to head…and without self-assessment you are in a landscape with no signposts!

So this process starts with learning about you - your experiences, values, interests, personal qualities, talents, and abilities. Ask yourself questions such as: What do I do well and enjoy doing?, What aspects of work do I value?, What environments stimulate me?, What do I want from a job or career?, What are my goals?, What are the most important rewards for me in a career?

For further reflection and career interest exploration, here are some examples of web sites containing a variety of assessments and career interest activities.

A useful website is the My Future website. The section, "My Guide", contains career exploration activities. For example, in "My Profile" you can learn about your interests, skills, values and more, and then use this to identify career ideas. You can then explore occupation descriptions in “the Facts”: www.myfuture.edu.au.

Here are some other websites where you can work through self-assessment activities:

• The Keirsey Temperament Sorter®-II (KTS®-II) is a 70 question personality instrument that helps individuals discover their personality type. You can take a free sorter, and also get a Temperament Mini report for free. Other reports are available for optional purchase: ww.keirsey.com

• HumanMetrics - Jung Typology Test - This 72 item test is based on Carl Jung and Isabel Briggs Myers typological approach to personality. There are links to sites with type profiles also: http://www.humanmetrics.com/

• Job Hunters Bible Web site - This site has numerous links to online tests and advice on how to use these sites: www.jobhuntersbible.com


• Personality Online – contains career tests and personality tests: www.personalityonline.com/

(Websites listed are provided to follow up areas of interest. Please note that while some are free, some may charge fees or require you to register. Check conditions of use and privacy information before use.)

Besides your career plans, what other goals do you have? Reflect on your life goals as well. For example: Raising a family in a healthy environment; Buying your dream home; Achieving recognition through creative efforts; Creating an estate; Travelling the world etc. This will help you to understand where work ‘sits’ within your life.

STEP TWO: GET INFORMED ABOUT YOUR CAREER OPTIONS

Research graduate career options and your possible areas of occupational interest – extensive information is available at the following sites.

As you look at the following, it is really useful to take note of the sorts of jobs that interest you, as well as
the ones that don’t. Look for patterns in terms of what you are looking for in your ideal graduate role. This will help you to gain an understanding of what jobs are available, the skills required and also to develop ideas about potential organisations to which you may ultimately apply for graduate positions.

**Tip:** Go through this careers information and cross off occupations that you are not interested in and develop a shortlist of the ones you are interested in.

**GradFacts**
GradFacts Handout series What can I do with my degree in ….?
These include examples of possible job titles and employers, plus numerous web links for all undergraduate degrees.
www.flinders.edu.au/careers/degree/

**My Future**
The section, "The Facts", has occupation descriptions, labour market information and so on: www.myfuture.edu.au

**Grad Jobs and Dollars:**
This will provide information on where graduates go, salaries, employment rates and occupations.

“I would recommend people to start out by creating a scrapbook of their career aspirations and include a list of everything you have done and the skills you have gained so that they are on hand when you start your job applications … I became a regular visitor to the Careers Centre. I often looked through the folders there to see how others gained employment.” Naomi, Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Laws and Legal Practice, Graduate Officer (Legal Branch), South Australia Police.

While there are thousands of potential occupations, jobs can be divided into different clusters of interest types (see above). If you can decide on one or two clusters, it provides a good starting place from which to begin your career exploration.

**STEP THREE: RELATE YOUR VALUES, INTERESTS, AND ABILITIES TO POSSIBLE CAREER CHOICES**
Review the information you have generated through Steps One and Two and use this to zero in on your career goals. Use the boxes below to summarise the findings of your career exploration to date and to record what strategies you now wish to implement.

What are my top 5 career interests? (For example participating in cutting edge scientific research; representing a high profile organisation; developing policies aimed at increasing social justice)

What attributes do I look for in a job? (For example client-focused, creativity, balance, challenge, autonomy)

What jobs/job titles am I interested in? (For example Accountant, Social Worker, Administrator)

What type of organisation do I want to work for? (For example: large, small, public sector, multinational, not for profit etc?)

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At this stage, my career goal is …? (For example: to become a journalist)

What areas for action do I need to identify and work on? (For example: develop contacts, undertake further study, explore study options, research employers, voluntary work etc)

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO? HERE ARE SOME POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO CONSIDER!

- Undertake further study in an area aligned to your career interests – see our handout: Investigating Further Study.
- Do some work experience – whether voluntary or paid, as you undergo work place learning and gain experience, your self and career awareness may well evolve and mature, and become increasingly more defined. You can use work experience to ‘reality test’ the career ideas that you have identified through this process.
- Talk to people working in the field in which you are interested (consider joining a Professional Association).
- Participate in Careers and Employer Liaison Centre programs designed to build your career awareness and skills, for example: Inspire Peer Mentoring Program, Career Link Express Program, WorkReady Internship Program, attend Career Fairs and Employer On Campus sessions, Graduate Skills Development program and more!
- Take time out and spend a few months travelling or building up your skills and work experience.

Attend a Drop In Session at the Careers and Employer Liaison Centre and discuss your career goals with a Career Development Consultant. Use the Drop In service for a sounding board to discuss the pros and cons of different options, pathways, strategies and to clarify your ideas. This process is more about exploring the wide range of opportunities open to you and how to proceed. View weekly scheduled times check:

www.flinders.edu.au/careers/services/careersadvice/dropin.cfm

CONCLUSION

Graduates have the capacity to undertake and enjoy a wide range of jobs but, unless you’re one of the lucky ones who’ve always known what they what to do, most of us need to adopt a systematic approach to career planning and decision-making. The decision will be yours, and the best decisions are well-informed ones.

“Don’t limit yourself to only one thought process about your future career. You never know the way things are going to turn out and there are many more options out there than you probably first realised. Try to find out about as many different pathways as you can and always attempt to gain some exposure to these different careers. There is always more involved in a position or industry than you were first aware, so work experience or career counselling is always beneficial and will leave you more informed about the choices available.” Hayley, Bachelor of Psychology (Honours), Account Manager with Julia Ross Recruitment.

SOURCES

http://www.careers.ed.ac.uk/STUDENTS/Getting_Started/Havent_A_Clue.htm;
http://www.get.hobsons.co.uk/advice/get-a-job-what-options;