

# Career planning



CAREER  
STUDIO

## What is career planning?

Whether you're starting your first year of study or you're about to graduate, increasing your self-awareness, knowing what's important to you and the opportunities that are available, is the first step to helping you to decide what kind of job, career or further study programme might be right for you.

Developing a career action plan will help you to focus your thoughts and ideas into a series of stages to work towards achieving your career goals. It's important to remember that situations can change, and your plans may need to be reviewed or altered, so be prepared to be flexible along the way.

With so many options available, how do you choose a path that's right for you - one that you will enjoy and do well in? It isn't always easy to work this out, so, listed below, are the four stages of a career plan to help you:

## Getting to know you

Assessing your skills, values, interests and motivations will help you develop your self-awareness. Listing your strengths and weaknesses will help to identify any possible gaps in your skill set which you may want to go on to develop. It is also a great start to narrowing down your list of key requirements.

Some useful questions to ask yourself:

- What are your skills and strengths?
- What kind of personality do you have?
- What do you like doing and importantly, what would you want to avoid?
- What interests you? Often your interests can indicate the types of jobs you may enjoy
- What is important to you and would motivate you? (e.g. money, helping others, meeting targets)
- Do you want to work for yourself rather than be employed by someone else?
- What are your circumstances? (e.g. family commitments, location, minimum salary)

There are a range of self-assessment tools that can help you to know yourself better. You can use your results when writing your CV, applications and preparing for interviews too!

Assess your personality type by taking one of the many online personality tests:

- 123test - personality test  
<https://www.123test.com/personality-test/>
- 16personalities -  
<https://www.16personalities.com/>
- mydiscprofile - personality test  
<https://www.mydiscprofile.com/en-gb/>

Carry out a values assessment to identify what you consider to be important in the way you live and work:

- Barrett Values Centre: Personal Values Assessment - Find out what is important to you  
<https://www.valuescentre.com/tools-assessments/pva/>

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## Explore your ideas and options

Now you have an idea of your skills, interests and what is important to you, you can start to explore and match yourself to possible options.

There are a range of online career tools available that can help:

- Prospects Job Match Quiz – a quiz to find out what type of job would suit you  
<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-match>
- Prospects Planner - a questionnaire that asks about your interests, skills and motivations. It then matches your interests to a wide range of graduate job profiles  
<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/planner>

- All about Careers: Careers Test - questionnaire to identify your skills and interests and what industry sectors might suit you  
<https://www.allaboutcareers.com/career-test>

Explore your career options and see where your degree could take you:

- Prospects - What can I do with my degree?  
[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)
- TARGETjobs guide to your career options  
<https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/degree-subjects-your-options>

Researching general career areas is a great way to uncover jobs you may have never heard of before. You can browse a range of popular job descriptions to find out more information for each role:

- TARGETjobs – Job Descriptions  
<https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-descriptions>
- Prospects – Job Profiles  
<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles>

Networking can provide you with really useful information when career planning. Careers events will give you a chance to speak to employers and find out more about different jobs you may never have heard of before. LinkedIn is also another good way to network with employers and find out more about different career options.

### Make a decision

Hopefully, now that you know a bit more about yourself and the options available to you, you will be feeling inspired and ready to make some decisions. It's time to identify some general aims - compare and narrow down your list of options.

Remember to be flexible to allow for changes in your plan – things don't always go as expected. It's a good idea to have a couple of options or a 'Plan B'. Some useful questions to ask yourself:

- Will you enjoy doing the job every day?
- Have you got all the skills and experience you need?
- Do you have any gaps to fill?
- Do you need to explore further study or training?
- Will you be making any compromises?
- When should you be applying for opportunities?

Your career plan can be in any format that works for you. Start with your general aims and then break each one down into a set of SMART goals:

**Specific** – Identify a clear outcome you want to achieve

**Measurable** – How will you know when you've completed it? Can you see your progress?

**Achievable** - Is your goal realistic and within reach? Are you motivated to complete it?

**Relevant** - Does your goal tie into your next steps?

**Time-frame** - When will you complete it by? Setting a deadline can help keep you on track

Your career plan should outline how you'll get to where you want to be, what actions you will need to take and when. If it helps, you can separate your overall goal into short, medium and long-term aims.

### Take action

This is where you make your plan happen!

Don't forget that career planning is a continuous process. Your situation and priorities can change, so reviewing your progress regularly is a good idea to ensure that your goals are still relevant and that you are on track – remember to be flexible and willing to adjust your plan if necessary.

### How can I get further support?

You can receive peer to peer career support from our Career Coaches via our Digital Career Studio.

To get in touch you can:

- Email [careers@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:careers@staffs.ac.uk)
- Telephone 01782 294991
- Or ask a question on our online chat at [www.staffs.ac.uk/careers](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/careers).

Other leaflets in this series:

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Work experience

Available online at [www.staffs.ac.uk](http://www.staffs.ac.uk) or from the Career Studio