

COURSE AND CAREER DECISION MAKING

Throughout our lives we all face times when we must make decisions about our next career move. It may be that we are looking for a change in our work lives or that change has been imposed on us.

At times, our next course or career step may be straight forward and easy to navigate and at other times it may be confusing and overwhelming.

An effective strategy is to break your decision making down into four key steps.

TIP! This resource, with hyperlinks, is available at <https://www.jcu.edu.au/careers/information-sheets>

Step 1. Understand yourself

Self-Awareness, is understanding yourself, what drives you (motivators) your values; interests; skills; strengths; and personal attributes. Knowledge of your traits and what is important to you will assist at various stages of your life, particularly when making career and study choices.

Helpful **free resources** to assist with **self-exploration** include:

- The [You and Your Career](#) module within the **JCU Employability Edge** program helps you explore your unique personal attributes, values, skills, and interests.
- [MyFuture](#) and [My Next Move: O*Net Interest Profiler](#) offer psychometric Interests tests to identify occupations which may match your interests, plus MyFuture offers Skills, Knowledge and Work Conditions quizzes which complement the Interest test and provides more context for consideration.
- [Personal Values](#) offers a test to help identify what is important to you.
- Open-source Psychometrics Project offers the [Holland Code \(RIASEC\) Test](#) and the [Big Five Personality Tests](#) to identify your occupational interests and personality traits.
- 123Test offers a [Career aptitude test](#) examining careers that potentially fit with your personality.
- [MyPlan](#) offers a free Career Values Assessment examining your underlying needs and motivations.

TIP! These resources are designed to give you ideas of careers to explore. However, there are many factors which need to be considered when determining your future career direction and a conversation with a careers counsellor to help make sense of the resource suggestions is highly recommended.

Step 2. Research career opportunities

Exploring opportunities to gain an understanding of career paths, job options, qualifications required, future job prospects and study/course options available takes time and commitment. Some things to consider are :

Career Options and Labour Market Information

- JCU discipline-specific [Career Snapshots](#) provide information on graduate job opportunities, registration requirements and career paths for each of the degrees at JCU.
- [The Good Universities Guide](#) provides information on 400 plus occupations, including core duties of the job, personal requirements, education and training requirements and employment opportunities.
- [Jobs and Skills Australia](#) provides current labour market information, including employment by industry and occupation, unemployment rates, monthly job vacancies, employment projections and emerging and future workforce skills needs.
- [Your Career](#) developed by the National Careers Institute connects you to education, training and work resources and support

- [Australian Jobs 2023](#) provides an overview of trends in the Australian labour market and opportunities across industries, occupations, and locations. It outlines how to find a job, where vacancies are located and what employers are looking for.
- [Prosple](#) and [GradConnection](#) link you to graduate jobs, internships and graduate programs in Australia plus provide career advice on industry areas, career planning and job applications.
- [Seek](#) and other job boards provide information on the range of jobs available in your area of interest. The job advertisements often list the qualifications required for the positions.
- [100 Jobs of the Future](#) reports on the future of work in an increasingly technologically driven society and identifies the jobs that will emerge in the future, and the skills and interests that are needed.

Course Options and Outcomes

- [ComparED](#) provides information on current students and recent graduates' overall experiences at all Australian universities, including ratings of teaching practices, resources, and support services, by institution and study area. It also provides information on graduate employment outcomes and median starting salaries.
- [Course Seeker](#) provides information on all on-campus and online undergraduate courses across Australia.
- [QTAC](#) Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre or other [Interstate Tertiary Admission Centres](#) provide information on all undergraduate tertiary courses within the relevant states and territories.
- [The Good Universities Guide](#) provides information on courses available at Australian universities, TAFE, and private training colleges.
- [LinkedIn](#) allows registered members to view the careers paths of professionals in your fields of interest. Check the **Alumni** (graduate students) section on the LinkedIn page of a university of interest (e.g. [James Cook University LinkedIn](#)) to research career paths of graduates. Registration on LinkedIn is free.

TIP! Aim to narrow down your ideas to those most appealing.

Step 3. Narrow and test your ideas

Once you have some career and study opportunities, now it is time to explore your ideas in more detail.

- Read the course information of degrees of interest. In particular, the **course overview; subject descriptions and career opportunities**. Exploring the course content will assist understanding what might connect with your interests, strengths, and future career plans.
- Find people (maybe through LinkedIn) and talk to those already working in areas of interests or those studying the course you are considering. Questions you may like to ask include: Where did your degree take you? What do you do in a typical workday? Is there any recommendations entering this occupation? What are the biggest challenges? Any suggestions in making myself more employable?
- Gain experience or observe the career you are interested in through work experience, job shadowing or volunteering. If your course includes placements, use this as an opportunity to build your network.
- If there is a special area for extra development, take a short course such as a MOOC to trial an academic area you are interested in pursuing before you commit to study. A good resource is [Class Central](#).

Step 4. Decide

Decisions may be made intuitively, rationally, or through a combination of these thought processes.

You may like to try this strategy: list the **pros (advantages)** and **cons (disadvantages)** for each of your ideas to clarify which option best suits what you know about yourself, and what is important to you. Maybe you could weigh the importance of each pro and con on a scale of **1 (not that important) to 5 (very important)** to clarify the really important considerations affecting your consideration. See which option comes out stronger.

TIP! While self-reflection and opportunity scoping provides you with important information to assist with your decision making, it is impossible to know everything about career and course realities. At some point, making a choice is important and it needs to be right for you at the time of making the decision.