

# 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 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.

## Step 1. Understand yourself

To identify what you would like to do next in your work life, it is recommended you consider your core values, motivations, interests, skills, strengths, and personal attributes.

Knowledge of who you are and what is important to you will assist in moving your life in the direction that is right for you.

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.
- [Job Outlook](#) offers a [career quiz](#) to identify types of work you most like doing and a [skills match](#) to help identify how the skills you have from past jobs are transferable to new jobs.
- [MyFuture](#) offers a psychometric [Interests](#) test to identify occupations which may match your interests, plus [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 Test](#) to identify your occupational interests and personality traits.



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 opportunities

Explore opportunities to gain an understanding of career paths, job options, qualifications required, future job prospects and study/course options available.

### 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.
- [Job Outlook](#) provides information on numerous occupations, including job prospects, salaries, and typical work activities. It provides information on jobs in demand nationally and locally, jobs within industry areas and future outlook predictions, including areas expected to grow.
- [Labour Market Information Portal](#) provides current labour market information, including employment by industry and occupation, unemployment rates, monthly job vacancies, and employment projections.
- [Australian Jobs 2021 Report](#) 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 look for.
- [GradAustralia](#) 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.
- [My Future](#) provides information on careers and Australian-wide course and training options available.
- [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.
- [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. It offers a [Future Job Quiz](#) to help you identify possible work futures for you.

### 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.



Aim to narrow down your ideas to those most appealing.

## Step 3. Narrow and test your ideas

Explore your ideas in more detail by:

- Reading the course information of degrees of interest. In particular, the course overview and subject descriptions. You need to be clear on what is learned in the differing courses to ensure the content plays to your interests, strengths, and future career plans.
- Talking to people already working in the career or studying the course you are considering.
- Undertaking 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](#).
- Gaining experience or observing the career you are interested in through work experience, job shadowing or volunteering. Read [Opportunity Scoping](#) for more suggestions on researching your career ideas.

## Step 4. Decide

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

An effective strategy is to 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.

If you are still not clear, then 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. Add up the scores to see which option comes out stronger.



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, you will need to decide and then test if it is the best fit for you.