

Career decision making: prepare yourself for a life of opportunities

As a student or recent graduate, you are at a very exciting point in your career: through your education and other activities you are developing skills ready for your next life opportunity. This may be further study, employment, travel, or voluntary work. With so many options open to you, it's not unusual to feel a little overwhelmed when it comes to decisions about your future.

Let's consider what you need to do to prepare yourself to take advantage of the many opportunities on offer and create a fulfilling life for yourself. And remember, it's never too early to start preparing!

What is involved in informed decision making?

The best decisions are well-informed. You will probably know if you have made the right decision as it will simply seem right to you. It is important to be aware that you cannot plan the rest of your life from here. The contemporary workplace changes incredibly quickly, so you may one day be involved in challenges that are impossible to imagine right now. And it's not just the workplace that will change over time – you will, too. You may develop different interests and values as you progress through life. However, while you can anticipate frequently changing your plans, there is also a lot you can do to manage your own career. Put yourself in the driving seat: when opportunities arise to become involved in interesting activities, or meet new people, grab them with both hands.

The earlier you start to make decisions the better.

Many people put off decision making as they are fearful of making the wrong decision. In fact, a worse scenario is to make no decision at all. Feel confident that if you make a decision that isn't working out as you anticipated, it is within your power to alter your direction.

When to start making decisions

You are already making decisions. By selecting your degree program and choosing courses you are shaping your career (although you shouldn't feel your future is restricted by these decisions). Decisions about your first opportunity after UniSA will be influenced by deadlines for job applications and further study applications.

The earlier you start to make decisions the better. This will then leave you enough time to start implementing your plans to make your decision a reality.

So, read on to find out how to make career decisions.

A step by step approach to decision making

Career planning and decision making is about considering yourself, your options, decision making strategies and your own decision. This diagrammatic representation shows how you can organize your decision making. It puts the elements of decision making into a relevant order to help you understand the process.



Based on: Peters, G.S., Sampson, J.P. Jr and Reardon, R.C. 1991, *Career Development and Services: A Cognitive Approach*, Pacific Grove, California

By developing an understanding of yourself you are in a good position to make a strong, informed decision. This means that you will need to indulge in some fairly deep and honest self-assessment and reflection about yourself in order to identify your values and beliefs, technical and transferable skills, knowledge, and your life/career interests.

Some suggested activities:

- 1. Make a list** of your interests and consider why you like them.
- 2. Consider what you value**, for example, helping people or animal rights.
- 3. Think about what you enjoy most** and least about your degree – and why.
- 4. Think about the Graduate Qualities.** Although you will be developing all of these through your degree you may have natural strengths in particular areas.

Know your options

This brochure has been written to help you begin to explore your career options. On the following pages you can learn about the industry and occupations connected to your degree. Use this information to spark your interest – you can find out even more through internet sites such as www.myfuture.edu.au, www.jobsearch.gov.au and the professional bodies associated with your degree.

Through exploration you can discover different industries, occupations and specific job roles. Some important considerations might be:

- what you will be doing on a daily basis
- salary
- training and progression
- entry requirements – and whether further study is required
- the industry sector, current issues and prospects
- what current employees enjoy and dislike about their roles.



Useful Websites

The following websites contain information, resources and tools that will help you with your career decision-making.

<http://www.gradlink.edu.au>

The official website of Graduate Careers Australia (GCA). Provides useful insights into career pathways from different discipline areas, average starting salaries and labour market trends in Australia.

<http://www.myfuture.edu.au>

A joint initiative of the Federal and State governments. Help with career exploration, decision making, job search and job preparation.

Decision making

People make decisions in different ways. Some are very logical and others are led by their feelings. Some like to make decisions independently, and others are influenced by their family, friends and community. Reflect on your previous decision making – how could you have improved your decisions?

Know yourself

Ask yourself the following questions:

- **Which decision** are you making?
- **How do you feel** about your current decision?
- Are other people **influencing you**?
- **Is anything preventing** you from making a decision?
- Have you considered **all your options**?
- Have you **narrowed down** your options?

Consider the **pros and cons** of each option.

Start to **prioritise** the options.

Experiment by forming a plan of action for your preferred choice – think of the training you may need, and how you would start to apply for positions.

Consider whether this choice feels right to you.

You are now equipped to make well-informed decisions. Enjoy feeling in control of your future and your career!

<http://www.graduate.com.au>

A wide range of career resources and information for students and graduates, including tips on job-seeking.

<http://www.unimail.com.au>

A comprehensive website designed to help students and graduates explore their career options. Includes a job search facility.

<http://www.jobsearch.gov.au/joboutlook>

Website of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. Find out about job prospects, weekly earnings and other useful occupational information.

<http://www.mindtools.com>

A career-focused website that provides tools and activities to assist you with your career decision-making.