



Getting started with your Career Planning

Planning your career can be a complex process, and won't happen overnight. So we have broken it down into 4 manageable steps to get you moving. If you want to discuss your plans at any stage, pop in and see us on our drop-in service Monday to Friday 9am-4pm.)

Step 1: Assess Yourself

Knowing yourself, your motivations and what skills you have to offer employers is an important step in the career planning process. It isn't always easy to work this out, but here are a few things you can do to get started.

a) Have a go at a skills-audit:

Think about the skills you have developed throughout your life so far. These can be generic transferable skills or more technical/subject related. A great way to do this is by producing a skills audit. This allows you to identify where your strengths lie as well as potential gaps in your skill set which you may then want to go on to develop. It is also a great tool when you come to apply for jobs, as it gives a comprehensive list of examples to use in application forms and your CV. Maintain your skills audit throughout your time at University (and beyond!)

Activity	Skills	Examples
Part time job as a waitress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Interpersonal • Teamwork • Time management • Problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with customer complaints
Dissertation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Analytical • Communication • Problem solving • Attention to detail • Motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing survey participants

Activity column: This column should contain activities you have undertaken throughout and prior to University. Examples include assignments undertaken throughout your degree, part-time work, internships, work experience, extracurricular activities, volunteering and positions of responsibility.

Skills column: Once you have listed your activity, consider the skills you have gained. For more detail on transferable skills, you may want to see our web pages on 'What skills employers want'.

Examples column: Start trying to think about specific occasions within the activity that you have demonstrated the skills listed. You can then go on to turn these into STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) examples - great for populating your CV or application form and answering interview questions. For more information on STAR examples, check out the 'applications' pages on our website.

b) Think about your motivations and interests

You will spend a lot of your life at work so it is important to think about whether a job will keep you motivated and interested. Take some time to reflect on the following questions:

- What determines your happiness/success?
- Do you want to keep your interests separate to your career?
- What motivates you? (e.g. money, meeting targets, helping others etc)
- Do you want to work for someone else or for yourself?
- Do you think you'd be more comfortable in a large organisation or a small firm?

Think about the experiences you have had so far, whether it be work, volunteering or extra-curricular. Consider what you have enjoyed? What haven't you enjoyed? Why? What do you think this says about you?

Make a note of your responses and consider them when moving on to step 2 - investigate your options.

Step 2: Investigate Your Options

Keeping in mind your self assessment in step 1, it's time to identify a range of occupations or career options that you may be interested in. We'll look at a range of ways you can do this . . .

a) Look at options related to your degree

You may want to start by looking at careers which are related to your degree subject:

- Check out our webpages on 'Where might my degree lead' for information on related careers and statistics on what previous students have gone on to do.
- Use our 'Faculty files' within our Careers Information room.
- Check out 'Options with your subject' on www.prospects.ac.uk for some useful starting points

Bear in mind that the majority of jobs do not require a specific degree subject. Employers value skills and personal attributes so ensure you keep your search broad at this stage.

b) Have a go at Prospects Planner

Prospects planner is a computer aided guidance tool that essentially matches your strengths, weaknesses and motivations to a range of graduate level occupations. Keep in mind it is not a magic wand! You may not agree with all the results however many students do find it a good starting point. When answering the questions try and be assertive (i.e. don't include too many 'don't mind' responses) but go with your first instinct - you don't need to spend ages over it! Once you have your results you can go on to explore the job profiles that interest you/are a good match in more detail.

c) Research industry sectors and job profiles

There are a range of useful resources to give you insight into occupations and job roles. Consider the day to day work activities, entry requirements and practical elements (e.g. salary, location, hours) and whether these link to your skills, motivations and interests in section 1.

- Check out the Careers Database on our website for insight into job families and links to external resources.
- Visit our excellent 'Information Room' at the Careers Centre and look at the wealth of information in our 'occupations section'.
- Look at the 'industry insights' sections on www.prospects.ac.uk

Have you considered getting some work experience or shadowing? This is the best way to get a true insight into an occupation. Check out our webpages on work experience for more detail.

d) Attend careers fairs, workshops and presentations

Attending our careers fairs, workshops and presentations is a great way of gaining insight into a range of graduate jobs from employers and recent graduates. Use it as a chance to ask questions and find out what it is like to work in an industry or for a particular organisation.

<http://www.careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/go/events/>

e) Speak to us

For more information or advice at any stage come in and see us on our drop-in service, 9am-4pm Monday to Friday.

Step 3: Make Plans

Hopefully, following your research into occupations and analysis of your own skills you will be feeling inspired (and perhaps a little overwhelmed!) So where can you go from here? This section will help you to create an action plan to bring together the work you have done so far.

Weigh up the pros and cons of the jobs you are interested in:

Job/Option	Pros	Cons	Next Steps
Advertising Executive	Work in a creative environment. Project work. Work with people. Varied.	Need relevant work experience – don't have any yet! May have to move to London. Very competitive.	Find out more from Careers Centre information room. Get on LinkedIn and Twitter to help find opportunities – attend Careers Centre workshops to help. Call Dad's colleague who works in the industry.
Teacher	Fulfilling job – seeing people progress. Good holidays!	Have to go on to do extra study. Lots of prep work out of hours. Not sure if this is a job I really want to do or just falling back on? Tried some voluntary work as a classroom assistant – not sure I have the patience to work with children all day every day.	I'm ruling this one out – I don't think, for me, the pros outweigh the cons.
Retail Manager	Allow me to build on customer service skills gained through part time work. Varied role – not sat behind a desk all day. Good starting salary – lots of structured graduate schemes with progression.	Potential long hours. May have to re-locate regularly.	Speak to some retail companies at the next Careers Fair. Apply for summer internship with John Lewis – go to Careers Centre to get application checked

A simple table like the one shown here will allow you to weigh up your options. Ensure that the pros and cons relate to you - go back to the questions you answered on your motivations and interests to help. The next steps column is great for ensuring that you are moving forward with your career search. Your goals can be as small or as large as you like.

Remember: You can come in and speak to us at any stage, drop in 9-4pm Monday to Friday.

Step 4: Take Action

Remember, you are in control of your future. Take those 'next steps' you set for yourself in your pros and cons table. This will ensure that you feel a sense of progression with your career planning. Here we will suggest a few options as to what those steps may be.

a) Explore occupations in more depth

This could be through further internet/paper based research, but to move this forward further - how about talking to someone who works in the occupation? Or even setting up some work shadowing?

b) Revisit your skills audit

You may want to build on gaps in your skill set to ensure you meet employer requirements. Check out the opportunities available through [LeedsforLife](#)

c) Make applications

Develop targeted applications for roles you have researched and are interested in. Check out the applications pages on our website for more information. Remember to always get your applications checked at the Careers Centre.

For more information:

We hope you found this tool useful, for more information and advice come and see us! We run a drop-in service Monday - Friday 9am-4pm and are located at 5-7 Cromer Terrace, just around the corner from the Student's Union.

Laura Trotter August 2012