

CAREER PLANNING

This section will introduce you to the Career Development model and the steps involved in reaching your career goals. It builds on and reinforces what you learned in your original co-op workshops and your co-op learning process.

STEP 1: DISCOVERING HOW TO CAPITALIZE ON YOUR STRENGTHS AND PREFERENCES

Self Assessment is the first step in the career planning process. An assessment of your interests, skills, accomplishments, personal attributes and values will provide the foundation from which you can identify the kinds of work that you will find most rewarding.

PERSONALITY AND ATTITUDES

The first step in your self-assessment is to consider your personality traits and attitudes.

Think honestly about how you react to situations and people, and mark off any of the adjectives that you feel describe you as a person. Think as well about what others would say about your personality. Make sure you are thinking about yourself as you are now, not what you would like to be.

Choose your 5 strongest personality traits and add them to your self-assessment summary below

Able to manage stress	Curious	Kind	Reflective
Adventurous	Determined	Logical	Responsible
Ambitious	Enthusiastic	Meticulous	Self-confident
Analytical	Motivated	Serious	Calm
Generous	Open-minded	Shy	Cautious
Imaginative	Organized	Socially conscious	Creative
Independent	Outgoing	Witty	

Top 5 Personality Traits and Attitudes
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Work Interests

Reflect upon what you've learned from your past co-op work placements, as well as other volunteer and work experience, about what you value in the workplace. Consider the following statements, and choose your top 10 work interests and add them to your self-assessment summary below:

VI = *Very important to you*
U = *Unimportant to you*

I = *Important to you*
NS = *Not sure how important to you*

	VI	I	U	NS
I enjoy learning things about other people.				
I enjoy helping other people.				
I like to entertain others and see people having a good time.				
I enjoy working with statistics.				
I find satisfaction in digging for information.				
I enjoy using the library for research.				
I often develop my own new theories to explain things.				
I enjoy expressing myself artistically.				
I like being creative and coming up with new ideas.				
I enjoy trying to persuade others to my point of view.				
I like organizing others to accomplish a task.				
I enjoy paying attention to details.				
I want to know what I will be doing each day before it begins.				
I enjoy surprises and unexpected events.				
I like working on several projects at once.				
I enjoy a fast-paced work environment.				
I like to always to be learning new things.				
I enjoy the challenge of working my way up in an organization.				
I like working outdoors.				
I enjoy traveling and being away from home.				
I like to set my own hours.				
I enjoy working from home.				
I enjoy being around others in an office.				
I like to discuss options with others before coming to a decision.				
I like to make decisions on my own.				
I enjoy the excitement and fast pace of a big city.				
I enjoy the sense of community and security of a small town.				
I like to compete with others.				
I enjoy work that is intellectually challenging.				

I like to work with the public.				
I enjoy setting my own goals and working towards them.				

Top 10 Work Interests	
1.	2.
3.	4.
5.	6.
7.	8.
9.	10.

Values Checklist

Values are an important component of self-assessment. They guide our actions and determine how we feel about different aspects of the world. Understanding your values can help you to:

- Determine personal and career goals
- Select a position and working environment that best matches what you need and care about
- Understand the kinds of people you enjoy working and associating with

Rate the values listed below, choose your top 5, and transfer them to your values checklist

VI = Very important to you	I = Important to you
U = Unimportant to you	NS = Not sure how important to you

	VI	I	U	NS
Security: being assured of a job and receiving a reasonable rate of pay				
Variety: having work responsibilities that change frequently				
Independence: working with little direction and supervision from others				
Competition: comparing your performance with others and having an opportunity to win or be recognized for doing well				
Schedule Consistency: knowing your schedule in advance and having a schedule that doesn't fluctuate				
Growth: working in a position which enables you to continuously upgrade and expand your skills				
Money: earning a large amount of money or gaining material things				
Creativity: thinking up new ideas, programs or ways of doing things				
Helping society: doing something that is worthwhile or of benefit to society as a whole				
Being an expert: being known as someone who has special knowledge or skills in a particular field				
Helping others: helping people, either individually or in groups				
Belonging: being part of a team				
Involvement: contributing your ideas and feedback and having them considered				

by others				
Power: having authority to direct and influence others				
Precise work: doing work that requires exactness or a high degree of accuracy				
Excitement: doing work that is fast paced and challenging				
Stability: having work responsibilities that follow a routine and are predictable				

- What do your values suggest about the type of person you are?
- How do your values influence your daily decision-making?
- How do your values influence the effort you put into doing home duties? Schoolwork? Art-time work?

Top 5 Values Checklist
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

STEP 2: TAKING AN INVENTORY OF YOUR CO-OP CONTACTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Step 2 in the career decision process is often neglected. Researching job sectors and understanding labour market information helps to ensure that the career you have chosen will fit with your expectations, values and interests.

You have a valuable inventory of previous employers and co-workers whom you could contact to help leverage your career. Part of the reason why these contacts are so valuable is because you already know each other. In general, the greater the rapport that you've developed with employers, the easier it will be to tap into the hidden job market.

Make a list of the names of all your past co-op supervisors; feel free to add co-workers with whom you developed strong relationships with. Even if a contact you have developed works in an area that is not closely related to your future career options, add them to your list. The key to remember about effective networking is the more people you have in your network, the greater your chances of connecting to new opportunities. So add people to your list even if you feel they would never have any connection to your desired career path.

Co-op & other past work employers	Contact information (phone, email)	Date to contact	Notes

Now that you have revisited the contacts you have developed through your co-op experience, review the section on Networking and be sure to inform these people that you are available for hire!

STEP 3: GATHERING INFORMATION DISCOVERING THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR YOU

Decision-Making and Goal Setting are the next stages of the career planning process. This is often the most difficult part of the process and will require a great deal of thought and introspection, as well as further research and evaluation to determine if the choice you have made is the right one. It is important that you set yourself realistic and attainable goals to ensure that you progress along the career path you have chosen to reach your ultimate career goal.

STEP 1: Develop a List of Careers you Became Interested in Through your Co-op Work Placements

Now that you have an idea of what kinds of things are important to you in your career, you can begin to match those preferences with career options

- Reflect upon your past work experiences as well as other work postings you noticed from co-op but that you never had the opportunity to try
- Brainstorm a list of careers that you would like to begin gathering more information on
- Talk to other people you know or meet about what they do or what they plan on doing, you may hear some ideas that you never considered

Don't rule out any possibilities because you do not have the skills or experience required. As you know from co-op placements, you can easily pick up technical skills; it's the **transferable skills** that the employer wants to see that you have.



STEP 2: Gathering Information

Now that you have a list of careers you may be interested in, you need to gather more information on these careers to find out if they are right for you.

- Choose one or two occupations that you think you're most interested in
- Begin your research on these occupations
- You can repeat the process several times until you're satisfied you have information on enough career options to make a suitable choice

What to find out

The kinds of questions you should be trying to get information on are those that will help you see what day-to-day life would be like in that occupation, so that you can determine if it matches with your interests and values. Some things to find out are:

- Kinds of skills needed
- Education and training required
- Duties and responsibilities
- Working conditions

Where to begin your research

Many of the same resources used to develop a list of possible careers can be used to find further information on those careers, making the internet a good place to start.

Informational Interviews

Many of you have already done informational interviews as part of your learning assignments during your work terms, so this should be easy for you!

- Talking to people in a field you're interested in is a great way to find out what a career in that field is really like, and also make valuable contacts that may help you find work in your field of interest later.
- Since you've already developed a strong rapport with your past co-op supervisors, you're at a great advantage to finding out more about your field of interest.
- Start contacting your past co-op employers to set one up with them to discover more about the realities of a career in their fields.
- If you've already done one with them, ask them for contacts/leads of other people they'd recommend you contact.

STEP 4: Decision-Making and Setting Goals

After gathering all the necessary information, you will be better equipped to make a decision about what career you would like to choose. Making such a large decision about your future career can be daunting, but once you've completed self-assessments, gathered information, and reflected on your past co-op work placements, you should have everything you need to weigh the positive and negative aspects of each possibility and make the most informed choice possible.

Begin by listing your options.

- These are careers that best fit with your interests and values
- Ideally they are options that you've experienced to some extent through your co-op placements
- You should have at least 2 to work with based on previous exercises



Evaluate each of the options

- Through careful evaluation of each option, you will be able to come to a decision
- It may help to list the positive and negative aspects of each choice and compare them



Get some experience in the chosen field

- If you are somewhat unsure whether this is a career for you, it may be more comfortable for you to take a short-term or contract position
- If getting work in the field you have chosen is not likely, try volunteering or doing internships, look for a junior-level position where there is possibility of growth or advancement in an organization you're really keen on, or work in a closely related field where there are more opportunities
- Keep in mind while you're evaluating your choice that people can change careers 5-7 times in their life. The choice you make now is not set in stone; and you will gain something from every career experience you have.

Once you feel you've made a choice you're happy with, at least for the time being, it is time to set goals and create an action plan to ensure that you are successful in the career you've chosen.

Setting Goals

In order to achieve your ultimate career goal, you may need to do a lot of hard work, training, and working your way up the figurative ladder. It will help you to break this down into manageable sections so you can measure your progress along the way.

You should begin by setting out your objectives:

Where do I want to be right NOW?	
Where do I want to be in one year?	
Where do I want to be in 2-3 years?	
Where do I want to be in 5-7 years?	
Where do I want to be in 10 years?	

For each of these objectives, think about the things that you need to do in order to get there. This could include:

- Working on developing certain skills that are required;
- Improving some of your own personal qualities that are important to the job;
- Acquiring additional education or training; and
- Gaining relevant experience through stepping-stone positions, volunteer work, or extra-curricular activities.

Creating an Action Plan

In order to gain those skills and experiences you just thought about, you will need to set goals for yourself. When setting any goal you should ensure it follows the SMART formula:

SPECIFIC
MEASURABLE
ATTAINABLE
REALISTIC
TIMELY

Use the following template to develop your own action plan. Photocopy the page if you need more sections, or start on another piece of paper.

Action Plan Worksheet

Goal #1	
Steps necessary to achieve the goal	1. 2. 3. 4.
Target Date	
Evaluation: was the goal met by the target date? Further steps needed?	
Goal #2	
Steps necessary to achieve the goal	1. 2. 3. 4.
Target Date	
Evaluation: was the goal met by the target date? Further steps needed?	