

Career Planning

TWELFTH EDITION

Greetings from MASCA and happy holidays!

This is the time of the year where we have completed our coursework and final exams. Some of us have months of free time before our next semester begins, while we must not forget to have a whale of a time this holiday, it is also important to wisely devote our time to beneficial activities. Of all the beneficial activities to engage in during our downtime, career planning is one of them, through this edition of the newsletter, MASCA wishes to discuss the various aspects of career planning.

CAREER PLANNING - WHAT & WHEN?

Career planning is not just about finding a job upon graduation. It is a **cyclical and continuous process** that you can utilise throughout your degree and professional life.

Whether you are just entering university or in your final year, it is **never too early nor too late to start planning your career**. The perfect time to start planning your career is now. You don't have to figure out exactly what you want to do or where you want to work straight away - the first step may be as **simple** as pondering about your interests or performing research on various career paths.

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STEPS TO CAREER PLANNING

STEP 1: KNOW YOURSELF

Understanding your interests, passion, values and personal attributes can guide your career choices and helps you identify the type of work you find engaging, rewarding or even intimidating. A sound understanding of your strengths and attributes will also aid you in conveying your values to the right employer. To improve self-awareness, these are the factors to be considered:

Interests

Think about your **recent endeavours or experiences** (e.g. subjects you have studied, work experience, volunteering, travel, sports, arts, hobbies) and the aspects you found most enjoyable.

Values

Your values will often influence your opinion on the kind of work you find fulfilling. **What is important and meaningful to you** in life and how might that relate to your career? Values that influence people's career decisions can include helping others, prestige or status, autonomy, intellectual challenge, money, work-life balance, and work environment.

Skills

What are your **strengths**? Identify and clearly articulate the skills you have developed or utilised during your studies, work, extracurricular activities, volunteering and life experiences.

E.g., communication skills from university presentations and resolving customer complaints at your casual employment.

Personal Attributes

Your personality will often inform your **role preferences** and the **working environment** that will suit you. For example, analytical minds may enjoy a role that involves identifying and solving problems, and creative minds may thrive in environments where they can explore new ideas and try different things.

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STEP 2: EXPLORE YOUR CAREER PATHS AND OPTIONS

Many graduate employers will consider graduates from a **wide range of degrees**. Effective research can introduce you to occupations you didn't even know existed. Consider careers which:

- Directly utilise the **specialist knowledge** and **skills developed** throughout your degree.
- Are **related to your degree discipline** where some of your specialist knowledge and skills might be useful.
- Are unrelated to your degree but use the **generic transferable skills** you have gained from your studies.

Even if you have decided on your career, find out what else is available as there may be options that you have not yet considered.

There are the many ways to explore one's career path:

Utilising Job Search Websites

Type keywords relating to your industry or interests into a job search portal and see the kind of job titles and employers that appear. Aim to simply gain an understanding of the roles in your field and the type of recruiting employers.

Research your Industry

Read industry journals or magazines, check news sites for information or new developments in your industry and follow organisations and people of interest on social media. Talk to employers at career fairs. Check the career resources of any professional associations (e.g. Engineers Australia) in your industry and find if they offer any assistance to students.

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Networking

Draw on the expertise of your networks and discuss your career with friends, peers, colleagues or academics. Consider arranging an information interview with someone who does the kind of work you think you would enjoy.

Trying it Yourself

Once you have some career ideas, look for opportunities to gain experience through internships, volunteering, industry mentors, or extracurricular activities, e.g. managing a budget for a student society (Finance/Accounting), participating in design challenges (Engineering) or organising an event (Project Management).

STEP 3: MAKING A DECISION AND SETTING GOALS

Once you have figured out your interests and researched possible careers, you need to start **making decisions about your direction**. Some common career decisions include:

- What activities will I undertake to develop the right skills?
- Which jobs and organisations should I apply to?
- Which job offer should I accept?
- Which industries will I invest time and effort in exploring further?
- Do I want to change my original direction (and should I change my degree)?
- Do I need further qualifications (eg. Masters, PhD)?
- What is my contingency plan if I do not land my desired job?

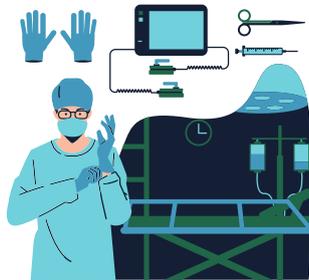
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Keep in mind that you don't need to have your entire future mapped out by your final year. More often than not, **unforeseen circumstances might emerge** which forces us to rethink our career plans. Many people change their career direction more than once.

Your next course of action will depend on where you are in the career planning process. **Goals should ideally be specific, measurable, attainable and realistic.**

For example, a student with a strong interest in Aerospace Engineering would aim to expand their networks with players in the aviation or defence companies, whereas someone who is still on the fence may set a goal to talk to professionals in four different industries within the next month.



We hope that this discussion can prompt students to ponder about their careers, set goals and take actionable steps towards realising their careers. MASCA wishes all a productive break!

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