Personal Awareness and Self-Assessment

University is a time for self-discovery, so take your time and enjoy the journey. It is important to explore your options carefully before making a decision but it is also perfectly normal to change your mind. This handout contains activities and questions that will help you develop better awareness of your personal characteristics including your values, interests, skills, traits and ambitions. Taking time to reflect on the areas that are important to you, what you like, what you do not like, and where you are drawn, will allow you to make strategic choices in your academic, work or volunteer experience. Personal awareness and self-assessment is a dynamic and ever changing process.

Use the information in this handout to strategically guide and reflect on the choices and opportunities that lie ahead. The result will be choices that align with who you are and what is important to you, and ultimately will help you to make better personal, academic and career decisions.

**What does career success mean to you? We define career success as a career that:**

- Aligns with **Values**
- Expresses **Interests**
- Utilizes **Skills**
- Fits **Traits**
- Supports **Ambitions**

Summarize your VISTA using the table below, identifying the most important criteria from each section based on your self-assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My VISTA</th>
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<td>Values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
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<td>Skills</td>
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Values

Values are the core principles that guide your life. Understanding them is a crucial piece in helping you identify majors or careers you might find fulfilling. Values provide an internal reference for what is important and desirable to you, and get at the heart of who you are. What are you seeking from your education, personal life and career? Reflect on and answer the following questions to begin thinking about your values.

What is important to you in your life; what are major priorities for you (for example, family, learning, money, relationships, health, travel)?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

When you were growing up, what did your family value?

1. 
2. 
3. 

If you could design the ideal or perfect job, what attributes would it have (for example, high salary, flexibility, recognition)?

1. 
2. 
3. 

Think about past or current experiences you have had (jobs, volunteering, hobbies, projects, etc.). What was it about these jobs or positions that you valued?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What else do you value in an organization, work, educational setting and in your life?

1. 
2. 
3. 

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Take a look at the career values list and select those that are most important to you.

Review your answers. Choose the eight values that are most important to you. Write them below.

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**Values Reflection**

What surprises were there, if any?

What is one value that stands apart from the others? This can be considered a cornerstone value.

What possible careers could be suggested from your top values?

**Additional Resources and Activities**

- For each of your values, write one or two statements about what each value means to you and comment on how it may impact your career choices or path.

**Additional Questions for Reflection**

- How would you describe your values related to academics or education?
- Are your choices in life influenced by religious, spiritual, moral, ethical or political beliefs?
- How important is it for you to help others or serve your community?
- Think of a few people you admire or respect. Why do you admire them? How would you like to be like them?
Interests

Interests and passions are another key part of what defines us as human beings. For some individuals, interests and passions are the area they value most. Experts have studied the correlation between interests and success in both academics and career and found a connection between interests and engagement and satisfaction in work. If you are interested in something, you are more likely to invest the time, effort and energy into it. Imagine not being interested in a subject and studying it in depth for four years or being in a career that you do not enjoy. Begin to think about the kinds of things that you enjoy in general.

What have been your favorite courses/ workshops to date?

1. ______________________________________
2. ______________________________________
3. ______________________________________

What have been your favorite pastimes and hobbies? What would your favorite pastime be if you actually had time to learn and practice it?

1. ______________________________________
2. ______________________________________
3. ______________________________________

What do you love to do? What energizes you? What activities absorb your attention so much that you lose track of time?

1. ______________________________________
2. ______________________________________
3. ______________________________________

Think about past or current experiences you have had (jobs, volunteering, hobbies, projects, etc.). Name the activities you enjoyed doing most from these experiences.

1. ______________________________________
2. ______________________________________
3. ______________________________________

What subjects of conversation grab your attention? What do you enjoy reading about?

1. ______________________________________
2. ______________________________________
3. ______________________________________
What other interests do you have? Did you miss any?

1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________

Review your answers. Choose the interests that excite you the most. Write them below.

1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________

Interests Reflection

What surprises, if any, were there?

______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

If you have a clearly defined career path, which of your career interests are being expressed?
If you do not have a clearly defined career path, which interests do you want to express?

______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

What career options, apart from ones already identified, do your interests suggest?

______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

If you knew you could not fail, or there were no limitations in your way, what would you do?

______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

What are 3 things you would like to learn more about?

1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
Additional Resources and Activities

Complete one of the following exercises to assess your general interest themes as defined by Holland:

**Self-Assessment: What is your Career Personality Type?**
The first self-assessment task is about finding your career personality type or "Holland Code." John Holland is a psychologist who developed a "theory of careers" that is routinely used in assessing vocational interests.

**O*NET Interest Profiler**
The O*NET Interest Profiler can help you find out what your interests are and how they relate to the world of work. You can find out what you like to do which can help you decide what kinds of careers you might want to explore.

The **Party Game** based on the work of John Holland is an interactive/reflective activity, which allows you to self-select your Holland type, and explores the six different Holland groups.

**Formal Interest Assessment**

The **Strong Interest Inventory®** is used to measure and describe interests in a broad range of occupations, work and leisure activities and educational subjects. It helps individuals gain a greater understanding of their interests and preferences, and helps in identifying potential career paths and education or training relevant to those interests. It also identifies academic or work environments that might be a good fit.
Using your assessment results, what are your three strongest Holland themes?

1. 
2. 
3. 

Additional questions for reflection

• What activities do you participate in just for fun?
• What kinds of activities are you not interested in, and why?
• What kinds of shows do you like to watch on television?
• What would be the best job in the world? Why? What would be the worst? Why?
• What issues or causes are important to you?
• What are five jobs or occupations you would try for a day, just to find out more about them?
• Imagine what it would be like to be in a career that fits you perfectly. What would it look or feel like?
• When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
Strengths

Understanding your skills and abilities is a key component to career success. It is important to take an honest look at your strengths, but also at areas needing improvement. Keep in mind that just because you are good at something, it does not necessarily mean you like it enough to pursue as a career. For example, cooking or sports - you might just enjoy these for fun! You have many skills and talents. It is important to be able to identify not only those skills employers seek, but also to clearly understand your unique skills so that you find a career that is a fit for those talents. This will result in increased career satisfaction and fulfillment. Here are a few questions to get you thinking about your abilities and talents.

What are your strengths?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What are your weaknesses?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What would others say you are good at?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What things come naturally to you?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What do you know a lot about?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What are you proud of about yourself?

1. 
2. 
3.
What awards have you won in the past?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What were your best subjects in high school? Is there a pattern there?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What kinds of extracurricular activities did you participate in while in high school?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What kinds of things did you learn from part-time or summer jobs?

1. 
2. 
3. 

**Additional Resources and Activities**

- Complete the online [Identifying Skills and Building Competencies workshop](#) for a complete overview of your skills. This workshop includes a skills inventory, pride list activity and strategies for building competencies. Complete all of the activities in the accompanying [handout](#).

- Complete the [Motivated Skills Inventory](#) and answer the following questions:

  What are your motivated skills?

  1. 
  2. 
  3. 

  Write down one accomplishment. Next break down the skills required to accomplish what you did. Be specific.

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
Traits

We each have a unique way of connecting and relating to others and the world around us. Think about your emotions, behaviors, and ways of thinking. Research surrounding human personality and traits has established connections between traits and career and academic decisions. Overall, we understand that these traits are patterns of behavior, thought, and emotion.

Here are some general questions to help you assess your personality traits. Below you will also find informal and formal assessment options to help you get to know your personality on a more detailed level.

How would you describe your personality?

1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

How would other people (family, friends, and teachers) describe you?

1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

Would you describe yourself as outgoing or shy? What does that look like?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Please explain if you think your personality is assertive or passive.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Do you seek out excitement or peace and quiet? Please explain.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Are you open to new experiences or do you avoid them? Why do you seek or avoid them?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Think of a recent decision you made. Do you act impulsively or do you take your time to make decisions?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Additional Resources and Activities

• This Jung Typology Test™ is based on Carl Jung’s and Isabel Briggs Myers’ typological approach to personality.

   Based on your results, respond to the following questions:

   What words resulted from your self-assessment activity on personality?

   1. ______________________________________
   2. ______________________________________
   3. ______________________________________
   4. ______________________________________

   Name two famous people with personalities that share your results.

   1. ______________________________________
   2. ______________________________________

   Which part of the description of your results resonates for you? Which part do you disagree with?

   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

Formal Assessments

Career Services offers two of the most commonly used inventories today, the Strong Interest Inventory® and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI). Career Services also now offers StrengthsQuest. Career Development Specialists trained and certified in the administration of these formal assessments will go over your results and formal reports in detail.
Ambitions

Ambitions provide a focus for your goals and career. Typically they are far enough in the future to allow for change, and sometimes there are changes or modifications made to these ambitions. Ambitions are a stretch from where you are now and connect to forward momentum and where you are going. If you have a tangible picture of your future this can help provide motivation and inspiration to keep going as you navigate the steps and sometimes the hurdles that will be in between where you are now and where you are going.

Each area of your **VISTA** can point towards a direction and help direct your ambitions and goals. Ambitions can include personal goals such as having a family, owning a home or travel. Ambitions can also include goals specific to the area of study you choose and the career you have.

**Reflect on and answer the following questions.**

What three things you would like to accomplish in the next five to 10 years?

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________

What would you like your obituary to say about your life accomplishments and the impact you have had on others or the world?

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________

What would you do if you did not need money?

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________

What are the three biggest accomplishments you want to achieve in your life?

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________

Draw a picture of where you see your life in the future. Think ahead five or 10 years. What are you doing? Who are you with? What do your surroundings look like?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Review your answers. Choose between the achievements or things from above that you want to be part of your future goals.

Reflection

What surprises, if any, were there?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

If you have a defined career path, how do your current ambitions align with it?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

If you do not have a clearly defined career path, what possible careers are suggested by your ambitions?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Additional Resources and Activities

• Alberta Government Career Planning PDF booklets:
  
  Career Planner: Choosing an Occupation
  
  My Choices, My Work, My Life
Next Steps

After completing the activities in this handout, you may feel clear and ready to start setting goals and making commitments. It is also possible you may instead be feeling confused and / or overwhelmed. Remember, this is only the start of your journey. Take the time you need to explore and reflect and take some pressure off by experimenting and trying new things.

Below is a list of a few things you can do next to help maintain your momentum:

1. Create a short list of 10 - 20 things you want to have in your future career.
2. Attend or watch the Career Services workshops such as [Exploring Career Options for Your Degree](#) and [Identifying Skills and Competencies](#).
3. Meet with a Career Development Specialist to discuss your career questions and if applicable, to review your formal assessment results via [CareerLink](#).

"Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life." ~ Confucius