Exploring Career Options for your Degree

Throughout your university experience you will often hear the question, “What are you going to do with your degree?” The purpose of this worksheet is to provide some strategies for you to find clarity and confidence in answering that question. Exploring career options for your degree includes three steps: Connect with what you want, gather information, and research options. This worksheet will guide you through these steps.

1. Connect with what you want

• Review your **VISTA (Values, Interests, Skills, Traits and Ambitions)**

• Complete other exercises if you need more clarity or want to explore patterns and potential directions. Ask yourself the following questions:
  - What patterns do I see?
  - What career directions do these suggest?

2. Gather information

• **Formal and informal interest, values, motivated skills and personality assessments** can help generate or narrow career options

• **Brainstorm options** and **identify work possibilities**. Ask yourself:
  - What did you want to be growing up?
  - Who is your career role model?
  - What careers have you considered to date?
  - With whom, and how will you brainstorm work possibilities?

• Review the **“What to do with a Degree in”** guide and follow the steps below:

  1) Before clicking on any specific major, look at all of the majors and ask yourself the following:
    - What majors have the most appeal to me at a glance? Why?
    - Do I notice any similarities or trends/themes between those majors? How so?
    - What majors have the least appeal to me? Why?

  2) Click on a major that you are interested and complete the following:

    a) Review the **Sample Job Titles** box on the left and categorize your level of interest in the listed occupations as follows:
Interested  |  Maybe Interested  |  Not Interested

Do you notice any trends or similarities between the occupations in each column above?

Why are you interested in the ones you put in the “Interested” column?

Why are you not interested in the ones you put in the “Not Interested” column?

Pick an occupation that you don’t know much about and find out more about it (see Step 3: Research your Options below).

b) Review the Potential Industries box and categorize the industries as follows:

Interested  |  Maybe Interested  |  Not Interested

Why are you interested in the ones you put in the “Interested” column?

Why are you not interested in the ones you put in the “Not Interested” column?
c) Review the **Job Sites** box and identify three jobs that are of interest to you (even if they aren’t something you would apply for right now, choose only based on interest).

What are the positions?

Why do they interest you?

What type of skills do they seek?

What educational background are they asking for?

d) Review the **Associations and Professional Development** box. Choose one to learn more about.

What did I learn about this association?

Do they offer student memberships?

Are there job postings through this association?

What are the benefits are joining this association?

- Follow the process above for other majors and compare your notes for each one you chose. Or you can *Google - Careers for .... Majors / Careers in ...* and do the same.

- Utilize **work search engines** to understand potential job titles associated within a specific field. Consider municipal, provincial and federal government departments and identify industry specific job boards relevant to the areas you are interested in.

- Visit **Explore Options** for occupational databases and online job boards
- CareerLink provides connections between employers and University of Calgary students through job advertisements and events
- Alberta Work Search online
- Or you can Google - Jobs in .... / Job postings for ...

• Seek advice by talking to peers, professors, alumni or people you know from previous work or volunteer experience.

• Identify your top choices for further research. Through connecting to what you want out of a career you can create a short list or set of criteria. This list is dynamic and can change as you learn more. The list is a tool to use when you begin to identify and brainstorm opportunities as well as throughout your online and in person research. From the options you have generated, identify the top 5-10 choices of most interest to you.

3. Research your Options

• Explore occupational databases to generate additional occupations for exploration and learn more about the ones you identified in the previous section. The following list identifies three occupational databases:

  i. OcInfo (ALIS): An excellent website with very detailed descriptions of over 550 major occupational titles that provides details on work duties, working conditions, salary ranges, educational qualifications and more. When looking at an occupation, complete the following:

    Which occupations at a glance hold the most interest for me at the present time?

    What are five personal characteristics or skills that are required to be effective in this position? How do these align with my characteristics or skills?

    What association is aligned with this occupation that might be worth exploring further?

    What are two related occupational profiles for this position?

iii. **O*net**: An American primary source of occupational information, titles and descriptions which includes a breakdown of occupations based on Holland Codes.

- Conduct **information interviews, build relationships and meet people** to understand the industry and the information you cannot access on a computer. You can find people to connect with through: student clubs, conferences, leadership and civic involvement activities, mailing lists, industry and professional associations, networking/employer events, volunteering, community or leisure activities, career and job fairs or trade shows. [Check out our guide on Networking.](#)

- Engage and explore **Social Media** such as LinkedIn which provides information on Groups, People and Company Profiles. Consider who you would like to connect with.

- **Test your options** and to confirm your career options. Gain experience through part-time, contract, volunteer, co-op, summer or internship experience. This experience will increase your skills, your network and provide references for future opportunities and help you discover and learn more about what is the right path for you.

**Next Steps** – bring it all together: [Book an appointment](#) with a Career Development Specialist.