

Career planning can seem like a daunting and complex task that involves learning, growing, changing, and experiencing. Undergraduate university can also be a time filled with uncertainty, change, and growth regarding career planning or making career decisions. Choosing a career is a non-linear process. It can be experienced differently from student to student. Some students come to university believing they have made a career decision only to realize they have changed their minds. Many students express they have “no idea” as to what they might want to pursue. With a vast array of academic majors and over 15,000 possible occupations to choose from, making career decisions can be overwhelming.

Career Planning is a lifelong process that unfolds throughout your life. “Career” is a lifestyle concept that involves the sequence of work, learning and leisure activities in which one engages throughout a lifetime. When making career decisions, uncertainty and happenstance plays a huge role. Also, remember it is not about making a single decision! Keep multiple options on the table. The career planning process consists of self-assessment, exploring occupations, making decisions, and goal setting. When reading the phrase “career planning” do not take the word “planning” as something that doesn’t change and is set in stone. Think of the word “planning” more as being an active participant in your career development.

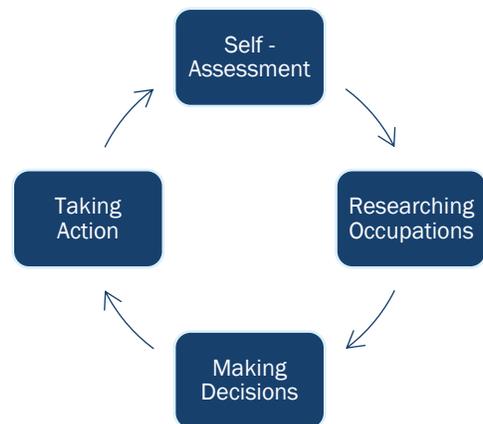
Career Planning Process

Self-Assessment: Getting to know your skills, abilities, talents, strengths, personality, areas for improvement, interests, career values, and aptitude. Questions to help you find answers include: What do I do well? What skills do I have? What type of work would I like to do or not do? What kind of hobbies/interests do I have?

Researching Occupations: The world of occupations is massive. If you don’t know what occupations exist, how can you decide if you have an interest in that occupation? Exploring occupations is about learning what the occupation entails, skills, abilities or knowledge that you need to perform the work, and labour market information. It also entails how your learning and leisure activities will intertwine with your paid work. There are numerous ways to explore options. Questions to help you find answers include: Will I be motivated to do the job? Do I have the skills and experience? What kind of work will make me proud? What does the labour market look like? Careercruising.com is a website that outlines the different occupations, salary, progression, and post-secondary institutions that provide the education or training. Other options include co-op education, volunteering, job shadowing, informational interviewing, service learning, working a part-time or summer job, and reading job advertisements.

Making Decisions: Once you know who you are and what occupations exist; the next step is making decisions. When making decisions, it’s important to look at what you discovered about yourself and also what opportunities exist in the workplace. It is not about making *one* decision.

Taking Action: Now that you have made some informed decisions, the next step is developing a plan that will help you to achieve your goals. Your goals should include any training, education, other experience, and job search strategies that you may require. The goals should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed).





What to Expect

1. Change is constant. You might enter university with “the plan” and four to six months later, change your mind. And yes, “the plan” can change on a regular basis. This is part of the journey! Also remember, “the plan” may contain various options.
2. Learning is a lifelong and continuous process. It consists of understanding of self and the world of work. Jobs that exist in 2020 might not exist in 2035. To be successful in the workplace, you will need to develop and promote your employability skills and keep current with the labour market.
3. You can experience various feelings throughout the career planning process. Uncertainty, frustration, confidence, apathy, confusion and many others. One reason why students become frustrated with career decisions is they jump to making a decision without looking at who they are, or what is going on in the labour market. Take time to explore and develop your skills and interests. Discover the various occupations within the world of work, and relate the occupation back to their skills, interests and goals.

Tips for Success

1. **Ask questions.** If you don't know something, ask a question. There are individuals in your life that can help you along your career path. Asking questions will help you to find answers which leads to making informed decisions.
2. **Everybody knows everybody and people talk.** When you are working or volunteering, make sure you put forth your best effort. As a result, you will be building not only your reputation but also your employability skills. This will help you to build your network and references, and add more transferable skills to your resume.
3. **Professors can make good references.** Many of the employment competencies employers want are covered in your classes as part of your academic program. Being aware of, and working on skills you may struggle with, will benefit you in your endeavors.
4. **Be an active participant in your career journey.** Discover your likes, interests, strengths, goals, career values and types of occupations that exist. It is hard work going through the different career planning stages. Think of it more as a journey.

Resources at StFX

Student Career Services can help answer the question what you can do with your degree and help in all steps in the career planning process. Academic Advising assists students with developing meaningful educational plans and act as an academic resource. Counselling Centre supports students regardless if a problem is big or small, a personal challenge, related to the transition to student life, or a career decision.