Career decision making

“Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life.”
- Confucius

Effective career management involves asking yourself questions throughout your life, such as:

- What do I want my future career to look like?
- What careers are going to suit me best?
- What are the steps towards gaining my ideal career?
- Do I need to study and if so, what course do I select?
- What majors or specialisation should I choose?

In order to effectively make decisions regarding your career and study options you need to be as informed as possible and have an understanding of:

- **Self** — your likes and dislikes, values, strengths, knowledge, skills and interests.
- **The world of work** — what are the options for you now and what could they be in the future?
- **Influences** — the many influences that shape you and change your priorities throughout your life.

Remember that no matter what you decide, you are not locked in for life. Reviewing your decisions and making adjustments accordingly should be a lifelong process.

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The decision making process

Effective decision making involves a number of steps:

1. **Understand yourself and identify alternatives**

   Identify what question you need answered, such as, what is your ideal next career move? Perhaps you have more than one question to answer. Are you willing to relocate? Do you want to complete further study?

   Take the time to do some self-assessment so you understand your:

   - health and physical needs or wants
   - geographic considerations
   - personality and emotional qualities
   - interests
   - strengths
   - financial goals
   - ambitions
   - skills
   - values and beliefs
   - influences and priorities.

   Rather than deciding on the first idea that comes to mind, identifying and looking at alternatives allows you to assess options you may not have considered. Brainstorm. Use mindmaps. Be creative in identifying your options.

   See ‘Solve a Problem’ at www.thedesk.org.au

2. **Seek information**

   Once you have identified a range of possibilities, the next step is to gather as much information as you can. There is no right or wrong way to approach this task. Look for information from many different sources such as:

   - www.myfuture.edu.au
   - reading job advertisements
   - researching on the internet
   - speaking to people in your field of interest
   - seeking professional advice
   - online career sites.
   - information interviews
3. Decide

Use your head and heart. See www.mindtools.com for a range of tools to help you decide. List the pros and cons of your options and analyse what this means to you. Take a break and return later to reassess what is most important to you. This is your rational mind at work. Then, highlight the things that feel right or generate feelings of excitement and positive anticipation. Using intuition creates a good guide for your initial impression and shows an understanding of yourself. This is your heart at work.

4. Enact

Enacting your decision means setting a goal and developing an action plan to achieve it. For example, if you have decided you want to be an environmental lawyer, what are the steps you need to take to achieve this goal? It might be changing courses, finding a mentor or obtaining work experience in the field.

Action plans work best when specific steps are identified. Each time you complete one of the steps, you have achieved a part of your goal. See ‘Getting Things Done’ at www.thedesk.org.au

The decision making styles

We don’t all make decisions the same way. Can you identify which style you may be?

- **Procrastinator** — pressure of making difficult decisions can lead to delays and indecision
- **Intuitive** — tend to go with their gut or instinct when making decisions
- **Dependent** — relies heavily on the opinions of others
- **Educated** — spends the time researching and analysing their options
- **Combination** — ideally uses a combination of educated (research), dependent (seeks advice) and intuitive (identifies their feelings).

To learn more about decision making styles, go to the Career Decision Making module in the Career Development Program on MySCU.

Decision making checklist

- I have worked through the Career Decision Making module in the SCU Career Development Program.
- I completed a thorough self-assessment and know my decision-making style.
- I brainstormed as many options as I could before I started collecting information.
- I spent time collecting information about all my options before making a decision.
- I examined the pros and cons of each option and explored other tools to help me.
- I identified the options that excited me and used my intuition in the process.
- I understand the consequences of each option.
- I know what I need to do to take action on my decision, what steps are involved and what I need to make it happen.
- I will review my decision to make sure it still feels right when I begin acting on it.

Where to find more help

- SCU Career Development Program on MySCU – learn.scu.edu.au
- Visit careerhub.scu.edu.au for job vacancies, events and resources
- Email for a careers consultation: careers@scu.edu.au
- For further resources and fact sheets go to scu.edu.au/careers

*Information on this fact sheet adapted from the Career Development Program of Queensland University of Technology qut.edu.au, available under creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/au