

# CAREER PATH EXPLORATION

## HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT CAREER PATH FOR YOU

### 10 STEPS TO EXPLORING CAREER PATH OPTIONS

#### 1. SELF REFLECTION

- Self-reflection is the process of reflecting on your motivation, interests, values, and skills and using them to explore your career path options.
- Use 'Worksheet 1 – Career Path Exploration' to document your plan for each section below.

#### 2. OCCUPATIONS WITHIN YOUR FIELD

- Research the different occupations available with your degree.
- Your college professors and college counselors are a great resource for information on career routes within your program. Reach out to them with any questions during your research.
- Have you taken any college courses that cover the different occupations in this field?
- Are there occupations that stand out to you?
- Do you already know which occupation under your degree you are interested in pursuing?

#### CAREER PATH EXPLORATION

1. SELF-REFLECTION

2. OCCUPATIONS

3. POSITIONS  
AVAILABLE

4. LEADING  
COMPANIES

5. CONSIDERATIONS

6. CONSULT WITH  
PROFESSIONALS

7. IDENTIFY  
OPTIONS

8. PRIORITIZE  
OPTIONS

9. CHOOSE A PATH

10. CREATE A  
CAREER PLAN

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON OCCUPATIONS

'Types of Careers by Industry, Job, and Salary' – The Balance Careers  
<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/different-types-of-jobs-a-z-list-2059643>

'Career Briefs: Facts About Different Occupations' – The Balance Careers  
<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/career-briefs-525860>

### 3. POSITIONS AVAILABLE

- Now that you know the occupations available, research the positions available under each occupation you are interested in.
- Helpful websites include LinkedIn, Indeed, Monster, and Career Builder.

### 4. LEADING COMPANIES

- Learn who the leading companies are within your field and for the specific occupations.
- Your mentor is a great resource for this information.
- What company does your mentor work with?
- Who are their competitors?
- Which companies are innovators in the field?
- You can also look at the websites listed above to see which companies have job listings in your field.

### 5. CONSIDERATIONS

#### SKILLS REQUIRED

- Make a list of the specific skills needed in your profession and the positions you listed in step 2 and 3.
- This information can be found in the 'Job Requirements' section of job descriptions. Browse through the job descriptions for the positions you identified in step 3 and list the common skills required.
- What skills do you have that are beneficial in your field?
- What skills are required for your field that you do not have?

#### SALARIES

- Research the salary ranges for the positions you identified in step 3.
- Consider how important salary is to you when exploring your career path options.
- Do you have some flexibility with salary?
- Who will your salary support?
- Glassdoor is a helpful website for finding information on salaries and health benefits reported by colleagues in the field and how the numbers and benefits differ between companies.  
<https://www.glassdoor.com/index.htm>

#### EDUCATION

- Research the minimum education required for positions for the occupations you are interested in.
- This information can be found in the 'Qualifications' section of job descriptions. Look through the entry-level positions as well as the higher-level positions that you eventually would like to work in.
- Consider what level of education is required. If there are additional certifications, trainings, or even graduate programs required will you be able to obtain them?

#### OTHER FACTORS

- Consider other barriers to your career goals.
- For instance, investigate which positions are hiring or are in high demand.
- What other factors might interfere with your ability to pursue an occupation within your degree?
- Ask your mentor what barriers prevented them from pursuing different career paths.

## 6. CONSULT WITH PROFESSIONALS

### INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

- Reach out to professionals in the field and request to meet with them for 30 minutes in person or over the phone to discuss their career path and ask a few questions about the industry.
- Try to find people who are working in occupations that you would like to learn more about. Ask them questions about where they started and how they got to the position they are in now.

### JOB SHADOWING

- Many people are happy to have students shadow them to learn more about the work they do.
- Job shadowing is a valuable way to learn how professionals in your field work on a daily basis.
- Additionally, job shadowing is an affordable way to quickly learn if a specific occupation or position is right for you and can help you narrow down your career path choices.
- Furthermore, shadowing professionals is also an advantageous way to make professional connections that could lead to a job.
- Use your personal and business relationships to connect with professionals who are working in occupations you are interested in learning more about.

### INTERNSHIPS

- An internship is a temporary position with a company, either part-time or full-time, working as an entry-level professional in your field.
- Many internships are three to six months long.
- Internships are a great way to learn how a company works and the daily tasks required for the different positions.
- Many companies welcome interns, as they are an inexpensive way to get work done in the office.
- To inquire about internships with a specific company, go to their website and look at the career section.
- If there is a company you would like to intern for, but they do not have a posting for an internship position on their website, then send an email or call the company letting them know you are interested in an internship opportunity.
- Another helpful resource is your personal connections and professional network. Who do you know who works at a company you are interested in?
- Websites to search for internships: Internships.com, Indeed.com, Idealist.org, and GoAbroad.com.

## APPRENTICESHIPS

- Apprenticeships are a great way to earn an income while you learn more about the field.
- An apprenticeship is where you work as an apprentice, or a trainee, under a skilled professional who provides a combination of training and job shadowing while you still receive a paycheck.
- Apprenticeships are harder to come by than internships, are longer, and are not available.
- Do you know anyone who has done an apprenticeship before? Ask them to discuss their experience with you.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON APPRENTICESHIPS

'Difference Between Interns and Apprentices' – The Balance Careers

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-are-apprenticeship-programs-2061927>

## 7. IDENTIFY ALL OPTIONS

- Now that you have compiled a large amount of useful information on your field, you can use your research to identify all your possible career path options.
- In this step, you will list all the occupations and/or positions that you have the skills and education to do, or that you are able to get the required additional training and education for.
- In this step, consider the skills, salaries, education, and other factors identified in step 5.
- What occupations are you unable to do because of education or financial reasons? Other barriers?

## 8. PRIORITIZE OPTIONS

- Compare your motivations, interests, and values to the occupations and positions in your current list from step 7 and narrow down the list to the possible occupations and positions that match your motivation, interests, and values.
- What occupations and positions motivate you?
- Which of the occupations or positions include your personal and professional interests?

## 9. CHOOSE A PATH

- Finally, now that you have narrowed down the list of possible occupations and positions to only include the occupations you are able to do and that you would want to do, pick your first choice and two backup plans.
- It is a smart idea to have at least two back up career path choices in case the first choice does not work for unforeseen reasons.

## 10. CREATE A CAREER PLAN

- Now that you have narrowed down your career path choice, it is time to create your career plan!

## REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON EXPLORING CAREER PATHS

‘How to Use Labor Market Info. To Explore Careers’ – The Balance Careers

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-use-labor-market-information-to-explore-careers-525637>

‘4 Steps to Help You Choose the Right Career’ – The Ladders

<https://www.theladders.com/career-advice/4-steps-to-help-you-choose-the-right-career>

‘Career Exploration’ – The Balance Careers

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/career-exploration-525632>

‘Make a Career Plan: 8 Steps to an Effective Career Plan’ – Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

<https://capd.mit.edu/resources/make-a-career-plan/>