

A Career Decision Making Process



i. Self Assessment:

It makes good sense to understand and know yourself before you start on the task of working out which careers might be right for you. So the initial focus here is on you – what are your skills, interests, values, personal qualities, strengths and weaknesses?

ii. Explore Options:

With a little self-knowledge under your belt you can start narrowing down the suitability of potential work environments by exploring how they fit with your interests and abilities. Make a list and then choose two or three options for further exploration. Learn as much about the job as you can - do your research (www.careers.govt.nz is a good place to start). Volunteering, job shadowing or talking to people in the type of organisation or role that you're interested in is a great way to find out what a job is really like.

iii. Decision Making:

Once you have spent time firming up on your own style and researching different possibilities, you will be able to better evaluate your options for the best fit. Some helpful methods of decision making are:

- **Values analysis:** Think about what's most important to you in your life and work - is it making money? Helping others? Being creative? Which of your options best supports your values?
- **Pros and Cons:** Select an option and list all the reasons you can think in favour of it (Pros) and then all the reasons against that option (Cons). Assign a score to each reason (pro and con) on a scale of 1 - 5, with 5 being the strongest. Add up the scores and compare the results. If the Cons win it may not be option you want to take further.
- **Talk it Over:** Discussing your options and what they mean to you with the people who are important to you may help you get closer to a decision. Also try talking to those who have had similar experiences or have made similar decisions.
- **Think "What If...":** Try to imagine you have already picked one of the options before you. How do you feel about the decision? Excited, uneasy, happy, sad, relieved? Our feelings can give us strong clues about which decision is right for us.

It's a good idea to have more than one choice up your sleeve – you may need a backup plan, just in case things don't work out. Try to have three or four alternatives at each decision-making point and remember to give yourself time to think your options over before making a decision – don't rush!

iv. Taking Action:

Once you've made a decision, you need to start making it happen. This involves setting goals and planning how and when to reach them - remember 'A goal is a dream with a deadline'.

Ask yourself:

- **What is my long-term goal?** e.g. work as an Architect
- **How do I get there?** Break the steps down into 'bite size' pieces or short-term goals:
 - i. Achieve NCEA University Entrance
 - ii. Get accepted for a Bachelor of Architecture degree
- **What might stop me from achieving my goals?** Identify any possible roadblocks and plan ways to overcome these.
- **How am I doing so far?** Review your goals at predetermined milestones – are you on track? Is this still the right choice for you?

When setting goals use the **SMART** format to make sure they are:

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound.

Remember, career choice is a learning process. You might make mistakes or change your mind - that's part of the process. If one of your goals or ideas doesn't work out for you, you can restart and try a different strategy. There can be many different paths to achieve the same goal and whichever option you take, there will be benefits: new experiences, opportunities to find out more about who you are and what you want.