



Career Exploration Guide

Considering your career options can be an exciting and daunting process. This guide is designed for current and prospective Okanagan College students, to provide you with some tools to help you to learn more about a) what you're looking for and b) career options that might be a good fit for you.

Here is an overview of what you can find in this guide:

Section A: A few things to know about career exploration

Section B: Introduction to post-secondary language

Section C: Questions to help clarify what you're looking for

Section D: Links to online resources that can help you to learn more about careers

Section E: Local resources that might be helpful to you in your career exploration.

In an ideal world, you would be able to take as long as you need to explore your options and make a choice that is the best for you based on your interests and passions. However, our career choices are very often impacted or even limited by our life circumstances, be it family commitments, financial limitations, a disability of some kind, etc.

If this is the case for you, the initial list of options might seem narrower, for instance, due to requiring a program that is offered at a particular campus, or a program that can be completed in a fairly short time. Nonetheless, it can be helpful to work through the questions in *Section C* to help clarify your areas of interest, strengths, and values, and help you to choose a program that not only fits within your limitations but also appeals to you in some way.

*** If you know that you are only able to choose from the programs offered on a particular campus, you can also contact one of our Educational Advisors for assistance.*

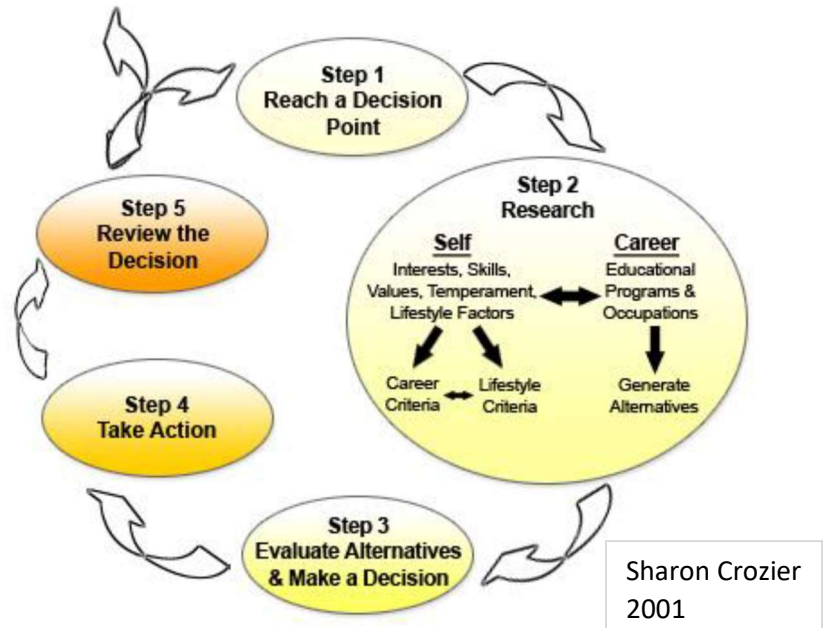
A. A few things to know about career exploration

1. Career exploration requires you to be a detective.

It's helpful to take the stance of being a detective in your own life, looking for clues about what is meaningful to you – and what you're good at – as you go along. For this detective work, it's a good idea to start a notebook or digital document where you can note down your discoveries as you go.

2. Career choice is really a series of decisions.

Career exploration is an ongoing process, with various decision points along the way, all throughout your career. For example, you might know that you want to help people in some way, but not know what role you'd like. With this broad goal in mind, you might either choose to start some college courses, likely in Psychology, Sociology, etc., and give yourself a chance to learn more about those subject areas, or you might decide to spend time researching the various programs that can lead to helping professions. Either way, you have moved on to step two after that first step of clarifying that you want a helping career. With what you learn in step two, you can then make a more informed decision about what your next step will be, and so on.



The graphic at the top of this page depicts the steps that are usually involved in making a career decision. As you can see, it's a cyclical process, and you will probably have various decision points throughout the course of your education and/or your career where you are called on to make a decision about your next steps.

3. Some uncertainty is normal – and can be scary!

One of the hardest parts of making a career choice is that there are lots of parts of the outcome that you can't know in advance. For instance, how will I do in the program? Will I love it as much as I think I will? Also, what jobs will be available when I graduate? Not to mention: How will it feel to actually be a _____? If you can accept that even after you do your research, some uncertainty is normal, you might find that you enjoy your career exploration process a bit more.

4. You don't have to go through it alone.

There are lots of resources to help you in your search, both online (*Section D*) and in the community (*Section E*). As well, don't be shy to ask the people around you about their experiences, and if they know anyone who does the kind of work you might be interested in. A great way to find out more about professions of interest is to do an information interview. You can read about information interviews, and how to set them up, here: <https://career.berkeley.edu/Info/InfoInterview> and find some useful questions you might want to ask here: <https://career.berkeley.edu/Info/InfoQuestions>.

B. Post-secondary terminology 101

It's often helpful to learn the terms used to describe different types of post-secondary programs.

| Type of program | Length of study |
|---|--|
| Certificate | usually 1 year or less |
| Diploma | usually 2 years of full-time study* ** |
| Undergraduate degree (or Bachelor's degree) | 4 years of full-time study* |
| Master's degree | 2 years of full-time study* |
| PhD or doctoral degree | 3-7 years of full-time study * |

* **Full-time study** usually signifies 5 courses per semester. Please note that many programs allow students to choose how many courses they take per semester, but some don't – it's wise to check the webpage for any program you're interested in to find out if part-time study is possible or not. For student loan purposes, 3 courses/semester is considered a full-time load, except for those students with a registered disability.

** Sometimes you can transfer the credits from a diploma to continue to an undergraduate degree program.

Prerequisites are the courses or other accomplishments required to be admitted to a program.

Semester is the name for a college term. They usually run September to December and January to April, and last for 13 weeks, not including final exams.

University transfer courses are offered at the college level: these are courses that you can transfer towards an undergraduate degree at a university. The BC Transfer Guide or the education advisor at your institution can help you to plan out your course choices.

C. Questions to help you learn more about yourself and what you might be looking for in a career

This section provides you with some starter questions to ask yourself in order to start clarifying who you are and what you're looking for in the world of work. You can ask yourself these questions, or ask a friend or family member to ask them to you. You may want to write out your answers for future reference.

- Name as many of your past or current school/work/life experiences as you like, and for each one, ask yourself:
 - o What did you enjoy or not enjoy about the experience?
 - o What are the skills you developed through the experience?
 - o Which skills and aspects of this experience would you like to transfer into your future career?

- Are there careers/jobs that you have wanted to pursue in the past, possibly even when you were a child? Write each of them down and also note down what is appealing about these career ideas for you.
- What is your attention naturally drawn to? Even if it's "just a hobby," write it down here. If you can, try to identify values that relate to each of the points you have written down. For example, if you wrote "basketball," values stemming from that could be physical fitness, teamwork, competition, etc.
- Lifestyle is important to consider when you're looking at career options. Ask yourself: what are your needs/desires related to the following topics?
 - Geography:
 - Are you willing to move away for schooling if needed?
 - Where are you hoping to live once you are established in your future career?
 - Earnings:
 - Do you have an idea of how much you will need/hope to be earning once you're in your new career? (If the answer is no, talking to an adult you trust about what they have observed about what's needed for financial stability can be helpful.)
 - Working conditions
 - Do you hope to work as an employee or be your own boss?
 - What kind of hours would you hope to be working – a typical 8:30-4:30 Monday-Friday workweek, or shift work, part-time, etc.?
 - What kind of work environment do you picture for yourself (indoors, outdoors, office, hospital, always moving around, sitting at a desk, etc.)?
 - Would you like to work closely with people (clients, customers, coworkers), or would you prefer not to have much contact with others in your work?
 - Any other questions that come up for you.
- Name any dreams you have for your life, even if you think they might never come true. Our dreams are a good indication of where our passions lie, so taking time to explore them can help us to identify themes that might be important to consider.
- To summarize, you might like to highlight or write out the words, patterns, or themes that feel meaningful to you – these could be guides for your further exploration. For example, maybe you notice that in lots of your experiences, you have enjoyed understanding how things work, or using your organizational skills. These might be clues that can lead you in the direction of a good fit.

D. Online resources for learning about careers

Now that you have more of an idea of the skills, interests, and values you would like to bring to your future profession, it's time to do some research about the careers that are out there.

Career Cruising www.careercruising.com

Career Cruising is an interactive Canadian web resource that provides detailed information on hundreds of different careers, programs, colleges and universities. The site also has interviews with real people who talk about what they love about their career and describe a typical day at work.

To log on to Career Cruising, the initial username is "okanagacollege" and the password is "careerinfo". Once you log in, you will need to create your own username and password which you will use going forward. Click on "login" and then "create my plan" on the right hand side.

The "Career Matchmaker" option is a questionnaire that asks about your likes and dislikes and can help to identify your interests. Once you complete it, you will get a list of suggested careers: you can open the profiles and learn much more about what the professions entail. (The "interviews" and "related careers" are also helpful tabs to explore.) Obviously there will be some suggestions that are not a good fit but keep asking yourself, "Why would this show up?" as this can connect to important values to consider in the process. The "Careers" tab has some good search tools to help you explore areas of interest as well.

WorkBC

<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Career-Toolkit.aspx> Resources in the Career Toolkit are designed to help you find the right career and assist you on your career path. Research career planning resources, take a career quiz or watch career videos. You can also discover which region of the province is right for you.

<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx> Explore 500 Career Profiles and get all the details you need, from job duties and wages to projected demand in your region.

Free online **personality and values assessments** can be found at these websites:

<https://www.123test.com/personality-test/>

<http://www.humanmetrics.com/personality>

<https://www.123test.com/work-values-test/>

E. Resources for career exploration in the community

If you have worked through this guide and still feel uncertain about your next career steps, it might be helpful for you to access some individualized support.

If you are currently enrolled in courses at Okanagan College, you can schedule counselling appointment with one of our Counsellors.

⇒ To book an appointment visit: okanagan.bc.ca/counselling-services

Resources are also available in each community.

South Okanagan Community Career Resources:

WorkBC Employment Services Centres

Offers services to help you in your search for employment. They have a large array of life skills, career decision making, and job search workshops to get you prepared for your next employment opportunity.

<https://www.workbc.ca/WorkBC-Centres/Thompson-Okanagan/Penticton.aspx>

YMCA Youth Employment Program

Offers services to youth up to age 30, including help with your resume and cover letter, interview and networking skills or if you simply need a community to help you reach your career goals.

<https://www.ymcaokanagan.ca/Programs/Employment-Services/YMCA-Jumpstart-to-Employment-Essentials>

Community Futures Okanagan Similkameen

Offers business development programs and supports for those interested in self-employment. <https://www.cfokanagan.com/>

Central Okanagan Community Career Resources:

WorkBC Kelowna

Offers services to help you in your search for employment. They have a large array of life skills, career decision making, and job search workshops to get you prepared for your next employment opportunity. <https://workbccentre-kelowna.ca/>

YMCA Career Development Services

Offers services to youth up to age 30, including help with your resume and cover letter, interview and networking skills or if you simply need a community to help you reach your career goals. <https://www.ymcaokanagan.ca/CareerServices>

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society

The Employment Services program provides support for clients seeking employment, and skills-development, and upgrading. They network with employers to optimize opportunities for employers to attract, retain, and develop careers for urban-Aboriginal peoples in the Kelowna area. <http://www.kfs.bc.ca/programs-services-2/employment/>

Community Futures Central Okanagan

Offers business development programs and supports for those interested in self-employment. <https://www.cfdcco.com/>

North Okanagan Community Career Resources**Community Futures North Okanagan**

Offers business development programs and supports for those interested in self-employment. <https://www.futuresbc.com/>

WorkBC Vernon

The WorkBC Employment Services Centre provides a place to help you find work at our Employment Resource Centres, and gives you access to One-to-one Employment Support to help you create and achieve your career goals.

<http://workbccentre-vernon.ca/>

Salmon Arm/Shuswap Community Career Resources**WorkBC Salmon Arm**

Offers services to help you in your search for employment. They have a large array of life skills, career decision making, and job search workshops to get you prepared for your next employment opportunity. <https://workbccentre-salmonarm.ca/>

Good luck in your career exploration process!