



Choosing a Career

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Your final university year is full of essays, projects, dissertations and examinations. It is also the time to begin forming ideas on your future career.

With so many career paths to choose from, it is often difficult to determine the best one for yourself. However, once you have decided, you should try and stick with it for at least a year or so. Future employers may question your ability as well as your credibility if your CV shows you change jobs every few months.

If you need to, discuss your career choice with your family and friends, and seek guidance and information from career counsellors and career libraries on campus. Career counsellors are experts at assessing skills, education, character traits and hobbies, and using all these information to pinpoint the most suitable employment areas.

There are also software designed to match personality and interests with career options. Enquire at your local library for more details. In the end, the final decision about your career choice should come from you.

GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF

Not sure what kind of job to look for? In need of a little help? Understanding who you are for the purpose of finding a job may seem overwhelming at first; however, this is an important and essential step. By understanding your own character and job preference, you are then able to choose your job accordingly.

You are also able to avoid wasting precious time and missing out on employment opportunities. Knowing yourself well not only helps you set up your career goal and to choose a suitable job, but also help you answer questions about yourself during the interview. Take a look at the following questions for some ideas.

I. What interests do you have?

Practical – handling equipment, machinery, materials, animals, plants and things

Investigative – analysing information, planning, organising ideas and data

Artistic – visual arts, architecture, colours and patterns

Social – helping or understanding people, arranging social events

Leadership – influencing, motivating, persuading and managing

Organisational/Administrative – organising, routines, systems and information





2. What are your abilities?

People/Social – instructing, helping, explaining and negotiating

Data handling – systematic handling of information

Ideas – develop ideas, innovative and original

Things – working with equipment, machinery and tools; precise manipulation

3. What have you achieved?

These are accomplishments you are proud of. They might be academic or athletic, having overcome particular personal difficulties, having made or created something or grappled with a particular fear. The ideal things to list are those that required some effort to achieve, and which made you happy and satisfied.

4. What do you value?

Values give your work a sense of meaning, worth or purpose. They could be any of the following:

- Ability utilisation
- Advancement
- Aesthetics
- Autonomy
- Authority
- Creativity
- Degree subject
- Environment
- Economic reward
- Intellectual
- Service
- Social interaction
- Prestige
- Risk taking
- Variety

5. What motivates you?

All of us have different psychological needs. Unless these are satisfied, at work or elsewhere, we are likely to find our job unrewarding, stressful or unpleasant, and we become unable to function effectively. Psychologist Abraham Maslow organised psychological needs into the following hierarchy:

Physiological > Security > Belonging > Self-esteem > Self-actualisation

6. What kind of person are you?

Be honest in appraising your personal characteristics. The results will pay off. Once you have completed working through each section, you can begin to form a self-portrait which should indicate distinct career areas.

Finding A Job

It has been said that looking for a job is the hardest work of all. When seeking a job, you should keep four factors in mind:

1. Just because someone else has described a job in glowing terms does not mean that the job is necessarily suitable for you.
2. Look at prospective careers from your own point of view, not from that of the Hong Kong market.
3. Just because you have studied one subject does not mean that there is only one job option available to you. So, do not place limitations on your choice of jobs. A whole variety of employment opportunities can arise from a single education area.
4. Do not be pressured by peers or family members to do a certain job. As individuals, we should choose career options that suit us, not our peers or family.





WHERE TO LOOK

A number of Hong Kong companies and government organisations run graduate recruiting schemes every now and then. You will be able to find out more about these schemes through your educational institution.

Attend career fairs at your university. Both government departments and the private sector organise career exhibitions for the benefit of final-year students. This is a good opportunity for you to chat with people who are already working in the employment field in which you are interested.

Be prepared with a few questions so that the employers give you the specific information that you want. You can gain from their experience. It is also a good opportunity to pick up company leaflets. These provide background information on companies that may be useful if applying to that company.

If the companies that you are interested in are not at the career fairs, or for some reason you miss them, you can request for information from the companies directly by contacting their personnel departments. Try the Yellow Pages or job sites on the Internet for more details.

Other directories such as the American Chamber of Commerce in the Hong Kong's Members Directory, and the Hong Kong Enterprises (Annual) Directory are also useful. These will not provide you with the specific jobs available, but it will give you information on companies and other organisations, and sometimes profiles of jobs and people who work there, so you can get a general idea on the type of work to be found.

Newspapers can give you the latest updates on available jobs. Many jobs look for people with experience, but do not be deterred by that. Most graduates do not have much working experience to begin with. However, you have other skills that you can offer a prospective employer. Do not be put off by ads that call for skills as these ads describe the perfect candidate. Sometimes, you may get the job by meeting only 60% of the requirements. You may also have other skills or relevant experience that the company did not think of.

In this electronic age, it is hard to live without the assistance of computers. Job searching has gone digital as well. Huge numbers of career websites are now available to provide help for job seekers. Many of these websites have a special corner for fresh graduates, offering a host of useful information such as how to write a cover letter and curriculum vitae. Almost all of these websites allow job seekers to apply for jobs online.

Having completed your self-portrait while incorporating your skills and personality traits, you should now know which job area you are aiming for. While you are in the searching stage, join a professional organisation that accepts student members in the field you want to go into.

For example, if engineering is your choice, then contact the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers. This way, you have a chance to know people already in the profession. This will help you gain knowledge from their experience and could lead to contacts within companies looking for graduates. You will never know unless you try.

Informal contacts are useful up to a point. If you have a friend or a family member who knows someone in a company with a job you want, ask the friend to pass on your CV. Then, once the contact has been made, it is still very much up to you to promote yourself. You will only get a job based on your own merits.