

Career Planning



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Why Plan?

A plan helps you split a big goal into lots of smaller, more manageable tasks. This can be helpful when thinking about careers because careers often involve big dreams for the future, but in order to make a long term dream a reality we often need to take action now. This advice sheet will take you through the process of career planning in five steps.

Step 1: identify your goal

Before you can start to plan you need to identify a goal for yourself, this could be focused on a specific career (e.g. 'become a teacher'), or occupational area (e.g. 'work with children'). If you don't have any career ideas you may find it useful to refer to the "explore options" section of our website: www.uhi.ac.uk/careers). Record your goal on the worksheet at the back of this advice sheet.

Step 2: undertake a SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is used to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in relation to specific activities. Once you have a career goal, then you can undertake a SWOT analysis to get an idea of where you stand in relation to this goal. There is a template given at the back of this advice sheet for you to fill in. When you are filling in the template the kinds of things you could consider are:

- **Strengths:** what experience, skills, qualifications, specialist knowledge or personal attributes you have that are strengths in terms of your career goal.
- **Weaknesses:** what gaps you have in your experience, skills, qualifications, specialist knowledge or personal attributes you have that may be considered weaknesses in terms of your goal.
- **Opportunities:** what opportunities there are that could increase your chances of achieving your goal. These could include: areas of growth there may be in the industry you are interested in, additional training and development opportunities, people you could make contact with or collaborate with, opportunities stemming from your current or previous work experience.
- **Threats:** what may get in the way of you achieving your goal. This may include where the sector you are interested in may be shrinking, what competition you may face from other people / developments in the industry, and threats from your own circumstances (e.g. limited ability to travel)



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Step 3: review your position

Once you've completed your SWOT you should have a better idea of where you stand in relation to your goal. Looking back at your SWOT ask yourself:

1. What threats do I need to overcome and what weaknesses do I need to address in order to improve my chances of achieving my goal? Identify 2-3 things you need to address or overcome.
2. What areas can I build on (e.g. strengths or opportunities) to improve my chances of achieving my goal? Identify 2-3 things you can build on.

Record your thoughts on the worksheet.

Step 4: set some targets

Now you know what you want to address and what you want to build on, your job now is to set yourself some targets. Having *clear manageable* targets and setting a *time limit* for achieving them will help you to take the actions you need.

When you are setting targets make sure they are 'SMART' – that is that each task is:

- S – Specific: so it's an exact task (rather than too vague).
- M – Measurable: so it's something you will know when you complete.
- A – Achievable: so it's something that is actually possible and realistic for you to achieve.
- R – Relevant: meaning that it will help you towards your larger goal.
- T – Time-bound: meaning that you give yourself a time to do the task.

Taking time to make your target 'SMART' will make it a lot easier to achieve as it tells you what you should achieve and by when. Here are some examples of some weaker and stronger targets:

Weak target: 'look for work'

Better target: 'check the local paper every Thursday for job vacancies'

Weak target: 'find out about being a Further Education Lecturer'

Better target: 'talk to my tutor in my next class about her work as a Further Education Lecturer'

Looking back at the areas you listed in step 3, set yourself 3-5 targets that will help you address / build on these areas and record them on the worksheet.



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Step 5: review your progress

Once you have written down your targets, schedule yourself a review session in your diary. Your review session should take place after you aim to have achieved all your targets. During your review session look back at your targets and ask yourself – did I achieve them? If not, why not? What did I learn from the process? As a result of my experience, can I think of other actions that I need to take?

After you have reflected on your experience, try writing yourself a new set of targets. These are likely to include amended targets from your previous list, and new targets. Once you have new targets you will also need to set yourself another time for a review session, and at this next review session you should undertake the same process of review and target setting. In this way planning becomes an ongoing and developing process that takes place over a period of time.

Further Help and Resources

Information on this and other careers and employability topics can be found on the Careers and Employability Centre website: www.uhi.ac.uk/careers. You can also follow the centre on Facebook: www.facebook.com/UHlcareers, and on Twitter: twitter.com/UHlCareers

You may find our advice sheets 'What Jobs Would Suit Me?' and 'Reflective Practice for Careers' particularly useful. These are available on the 'resources' section of our website.

Free confidential advice is available to all students on an HNC course or above via telephone, videoconference or email. Contact our advisers by clicking on 'speak to an adviser' on our website. This service is also available to graduates within two years of graduating from an HNC course or higher.



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Worksheet: Career Planning

Before filling in this worksheet you may find it useful to refer to the example given on p.7-8

1. Goals statement:

2. SWOT analysis:

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---------------|------------|
| | |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| | |



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3. Areas I need to address to achieve my goal:

- a.
- b.
- c.

4. Areas I can build on to achieve my goal:

- a.
- b.
- c.

5. SMART Targets:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.



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6. Review of achievement of targets

Date of review:

Targets achieved:

Targets partially achieved:

Targets not-achieved:

Review:

Revised targets:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.



Worksheet: Career Planning (Example)

1. Goals statement:

I would like to become a primary school teacher.

2. SWOT analysis:

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| <p>I am studying for a degree in Child and Youth Studies, which gives me the qualification I need for entry to the PGDE and also specialist knowledge in areas like child development and the Curriculum for Excellence.</p> <p>I have experience of working with children through raising my own children, and through working as a brownie leader.</p> <p>I am patient and have good communication skills.</p> <p>I have the required English qualifications for teacher training.</p> | <p>I don't have any direct experience of working in a primary school.</p> <p>I lack knowledge about teaching approaches and skills.</p> <p>I sometimes lack confidence in my own abilities.</p> <p>I don't currently have the required maths qualifications for teacher training.</p> |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <p>I could approach my children's primary school for work experience.</p> <p>There are sometimes jobs advertised for teaching assistants. I could apply for one of these to help give me experience.</p> <p>My best friend is a teacher, she is encouraging and could help me with advice and tips.</p> <p>I can increase my knowledge of the profession by referring to www.teachinginscotland.com.</p> <p>The college run maths courses – and I could enroll on one of these.</p> | <p>I live in Elgin and I would rather not move to undertake training. This limits my options.</p> <p>A large number of my classmates are interested in the same course, this could increase competition.</p> <p>Employment for teachers doesn't appear to be very strong at the moment, I don't know what my chances would be of finding work in my area after completing the training.</p> |



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3. Areas I need to address to achieve my goal:

- a. I need to complete my maths qualification
- b. I need to get some work experience in a school
- c. I may need to discuss with my partner about whether or not we could move to let me undertake my training.

4. Areas I can build on to achieve my goal:

- a. I have established connections through my friend and my children's school
- b. I have a real interest in children
- c. I have experience of running the brownie group.

5. SMART Targets:

- a. I will contact the headteacher at my children's primary school by the end of this month (February 2013) to ask about work experience.
- b. I will contact the college to enquire about enrolling on the maths course by the end of this week.
- c. I will contact the UHI Careers and Employability Service by the end of this month (February 2013) and ask for an appointment with an adviser to discuss what PGDE courses there are and to find out how to apply.
- d. I will arrange a time to speak to my friend to find out what her advice would be for preparing for teacher training (by the end of next week)
- e. I will discuss the results of my research with my partner to find out what he thinks about potentially moving so that I can do my training (by the end of November 2013)