

Getting a head start

This resource incorporates four challenges designed to get you thinking about your future. Each challenge can form the basis of group discussions, research topics, or reflections. They also work really well as short, targeted discussions, or as three-minute papers, for which you give yourself three minutes to answer each question.

Challenge 1

Engage in as many activities during higher education as possible. These include activities relating to your study discipline, and activities that just sound fun and rewarding.

Why?	This makes you better equipped for a diverse range of career types. It enables you to develop new skills and confidence, and to discover and try new possibilities. Also, many graduate employers value unpaid work as much or more than applicants' paid work.
How?	Pursue diverse activities outside, or in parallel with, your specialism.
When?	Right now! Find out what is available inside and outside of your university, community, and professional networks. Look online and offline. Find out whether your institution offers course credit or awards for community/service activities.

Challenge 2

Challenge your aims and plans.

Why?	You probably have a Plan A right now, so what is your Plan B? Have you thought about what you really want your career to look like? Even writing down some of the things you're certain of can help you turn down or rethink opportunities that don't fit with your aspirations. These decisions can prompt you to reconsider what you want from your life and career.
How?	Give yourself space to think through and talk over what is important to you. Enlist the support of significant people such as friends and family, teachers, mentors, lecturers, and peers.
When?	How? When? Right now! Ask yourself what you want from your career every time you make a decision or undertake one of these challenges.

Challenge 3

Take ownership of your learning.

Why?	You need not scrap your dreams if you feel that they are becoming unachievable. You do, though, need to think about your goals and how you plan to achieve them.
How?	Identify what you need to do to achieve your aims. Seek out opportunities to do this, or, if existing opportunities are not there, create your own.
When?	Right now! If you know what you want from your learning, you are much more likely to achieve it. This doesn't mean deciding on your career, it means thinking about the things you like to do and how these can form part of your future.

Challenge 4

Work out what 'career' success means to you. This challenge includes mention of subjective and objective careers.

Why?	Success can often feel as though it is defined by everyone else. Knowing what it is for you will help you make key career decisions.
How?	Consider the objective and subjective elements of your career (see 'What's your career vision?') and how these match up for you: what is most important to you in your career?
When?	Right now! Remember that however you define success, you will need to be diverse, flexible, and open-minded in order to respond to your needs as they change over time.

Make it count!

Having answered each question, two further challenges arise from the activity. To make this resource, count, put them into action.

1. Are you making the most of the opportunities you have? If not, take action.
2. Plan B is a reality for many workers. Start to prepare for Plan B by reviewing your activities, CV and study choices. Will you be ready?

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