

CAREER INFORMATION BRIEF #26 – Exploring Career Assumptions

The Centre for Career Education is excited to present the 26th monthly career information brief. The purpose of these career information briefs is to provide faculty and staff with timely information which they can use to assist students who are inquiring about more career specific information.



Introduction:

Many students harbour myths and stereotypes about careers. They have developed a strong habit of making false assumptions about career prospects, an occupation's working conditions, job duties, educational requirements, employment prospects, and more. These false assumptions have arisen as a result of having gathered limited career information. It is a common habit of students to develop beliefs in these false assumptions, which unfortunately, unnecessarily limits their career choices.

Some Common Career Assumptions

Assumption 1: Choosing a career is simple

Career planning is a multi-step process which requires the student to learn more about themselves and the occupations which they are interested in pursuing, in order to find, compare, and assess suitable matches, and to make an informed decision. A common mistake students make is to try to choose a career based solely on their strongest skills. Individual skills are only one of the components of a full self-evaluation. Assessing one's personal interests and values are equally important in the decision making process.

Assumption 2: Most students know their major and career goals when they enter university.

Some students may have a major or career in mind when they enter university and may actually stick with their original goals. However, a large majority of students will change their minds about their majors and careers several times before graduation. Understanding the career development planning process, undertaking a vocational assessment, and working with an academic and career advisor can assist a student in identifying potential career options and appropriate majors.

Assumption 3: Career planning is an irreversible process.

This is simply False. Career planning is an ongoing process. A common mistake that many students repeatedly make is to place their focus on finding a single, perfect career. This is very limiting. A typical person entering the work force will have as many as five or six different occupations by the time he or she retires as a result of their changing skills, talents, and needs. Change is the one and only constant in the job market and throughout life. Many occupations that will be available to a current graduate do not even exist yet! The goal for the student should be to choose what is best for them now, and then to continue to evaluate and re-evaluate that career once they are in it.

Assumption 4: My major is the determining factor in my career plan.

A job or career search is not restricted to a student's degree or training. This only becomes a factor when a student is pursuing a professional designation in an area that requires specific technical skills, such as mechanical engineering or nursing. Most employers focus more on work-related experience (e.g., part-time jobs, internships, and co-ops) and the real world skills that a student has gained than they do about a major. One major can lead to many different careers, and one career can be reached through many different majors.

Assumption 5: A university degree guarantees a good paying job.

The simple truth is that a university degree only prepares a student for entry into the work force. No university degree "guarantees" a stable, good paying job. The key to obtaining a good job is for the student to first develop and obtain the skills, education, experience and training for that job/career field, and second, for the student to develop their employability skills (ie. resume writing, interviewing, networking, and job searching). When all of these factors are combined together, they will increase a student's opportunities for finding a great-paying job.

Assumption 6: Getting a job after graduation will be quick and easy.

For a few students, getting a job after graduation will be a quick and easy process. As for the rest, it can prove to be a rather lengthy process. A job search is an actual job in itself and should be treated as such. The length of time it takes and the ease of getting a job will be dependent upon a variety of factors such as: current job market, the ability to conduct labour market research and to identify and explore emerging industry trends, the number of networking contacts, the ability to use multiple methods to job search, the amount and quality of work experience, the amount of time dedicated to job search, the quality of the resume, interpersonal and interviewing skills, tenacity, and the willingness to relocate and pursue opportunities.

Assumption 7: I don't have time to use the Career Centre. Using the career center is not important until close to graduation.

Developing a career plan, pursuing a career and/or graduate school can be a challenging and time-consuming process. The earlier a student can begin with the career development process and participate in career planning and preparation, the easier it will be. It is important for the student to participate in experiential learning activities, and to develop their resume, cover letter, and interviewing skills. Students will often complain that they are too busy with their studies to devote any time to career development. What they fail to realize is that career development needs to be interwoven with their years of academic study. It cannot be left until graduation.

Assumption 8: The University Career Centre is an employment agency who 'places' students in jobs.

Students are responsible for finding their own jobs. The Centre for Career Education assists students in the development of their employability skills by providing a variety of services including: job-search instruction, resume critiques, mock interview practice, help in planning a job search, and assistance in locating career and labour market information. The Centre for Career Education also posts jobs on myCareer, hosts an annual job fair and continuing education fair, hosts employer information sessions, and provides employers with on-campus interviewing opportunities.

Assumption 9: If I wait long enough, luck will deliver the right career.

It is highly unlikely that a student will just "bump into" an occupation that will perfectly match their skills and interests or satisfy their most important values. The more information a student can gather about themselves and the occupations they are considering, the more likely it is that they will be in a position to make a wise career decision. It is true that there will be some things beyond their control that will influence their life, but they must take an active role to determine their own fate. Labour market surveys reveal that the people who are the most dissatisfied with their careers are the ones who just "fell into" something without careful planning and consideration.

In Conclusion

Assumptions have no place in the career development process as these misconceptions can severely limit a student's potential career options. Students should be encouraged to participate in the career development process as they pursue completion of their academic major, so they are fully prepared to pursue their career and job search upon graduation.

Resources Available to University of Windsor Students

The Centre for Career Education offers a wide variety of programs and services that can assist students with career development including:

- a. Vocational assessments to help identify potential career paths and choices
- b. 1-1 Career Advising
- c. Experiential learning programs such as Volunteer Internship Program and EXCEL Leadership Program
- d. Assistance with resume and cover letter writing, job search planning, and interview preparation and practice through Mock Interview sessions

For a complete list of services visit our website at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/cce>

To help students prepare for work the Centre for Career Education offers the following resources:

- Resume Clinic – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 12:30 – 4:00PM Room 111 Dillon Hall beginning 11 Jan 2010
- Online resume critique – resume@uwindsor.ca
- ICAN (Interactive Career Activity Navigator) www.uwindsor.ca/ican
- Career/Vocational Advising (by appointment) RM 111 Dillon Hall
- 1-1 resume, job search, mock interview with employment advisor

To register for an appointment go to <https://career.uwindsor.ca> or click on **myCareer** via the student portal at <https://my.uwindsor.ca>, create an account and review and register for appointments on the events calendar.

- Pathways to Success instructional workshops focusing on career planning and development of employment readiness skills. To register for workshops go to <https://career.uwindsor.ca> or click on **myCareer** via the student portal at <https://my.uwindsor.ca>, create an account and review and register for workshops on the events calendar.