

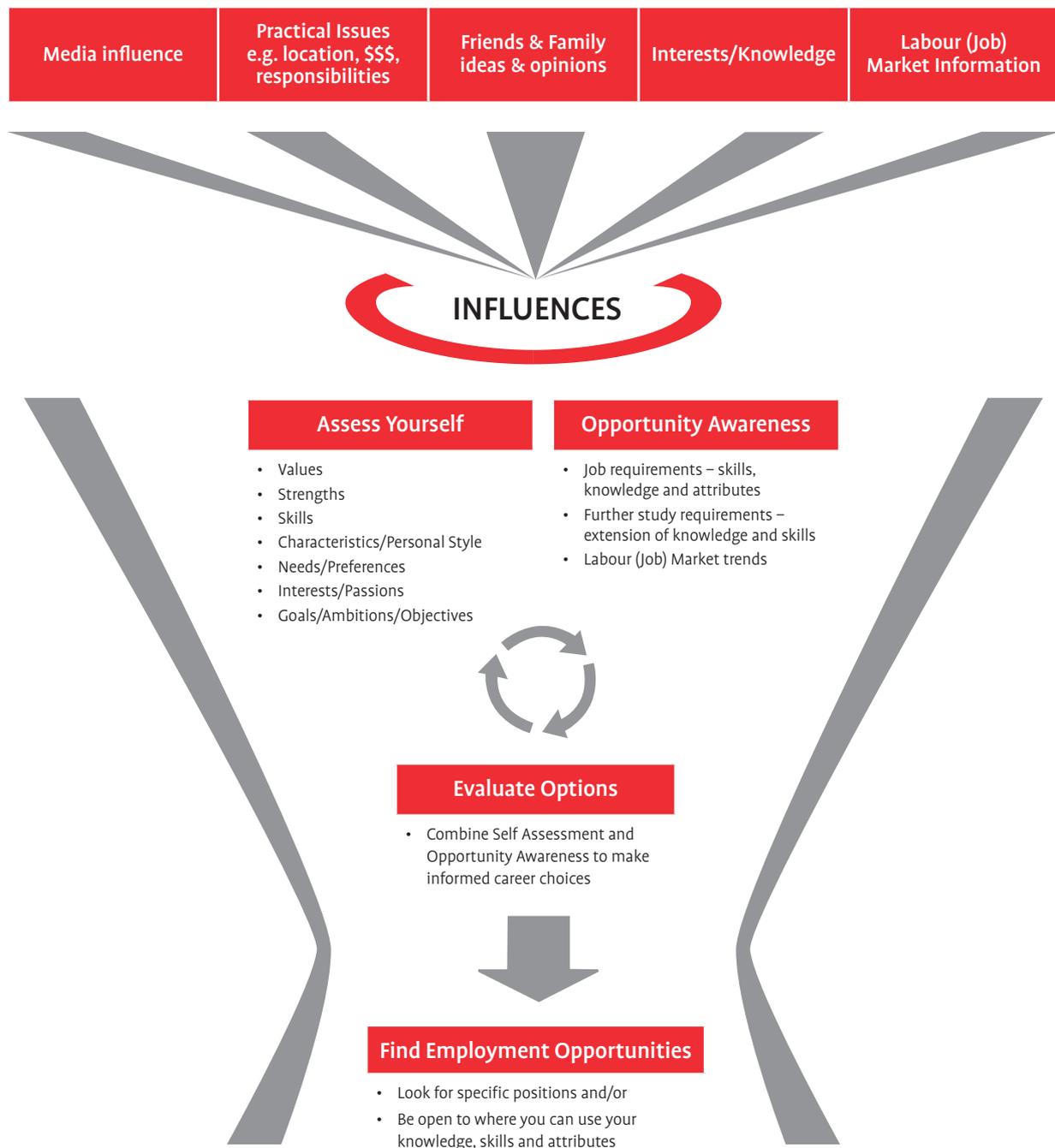
# University of Canterbury



**Parents as Career Educators**

# Career Decision Making Model

There are a multitude of career choices available to a student. Academic study develops valuable knowledge and skills, including the ability to think and communicate effectively, and a proven ability to learn. Take the time to work out what career choices are available and what really appeals to you. Making an informed decision contributes to a successful and satisfying career path. Career choice is an active process and should be a rewarding experience in its own right. Exploring the possibilities involves analysing yourself – what you want and what you have to offer – and finding out about different jobs in the labour market. This Model of Career Decision Making provides a framework to help discover options.



# Parents as Career Educators

Every day, we are reminded of the need in New Zealand for a multi-skilled workforce. Many parents want to help their children make the right career and training decisions.

## What Skills and abilities do you need?

### Listening skills:

Able to listen uncritically and patiently, and not rush to solutions

### Guiding ability:

Able to suggest ideas without forcing them into one direction

### Asking ability:

Able to ask questions that will help your children think about themselves (their interests, sports, hobbies and academic subjects)

### Lateral thinking ability:

Able to see the links between jobs, between skills and jobs, and between interests and jobs

### Assessment ability:

Able to assist in assessing the information collected, using categories such as “really interested”, “it’s OK” and “not really my thing”

### A ‘sounding board’:

Able to help your family talk or work through various ideas

### Encouragement skills:

Able to support and encourage your children to do the necessary research to come to a good, informed decision

## Some points to remember

We are often limited by our own experience. There are hundreds of different sorts of jobs that we have never heard of, let alone considered. Try to cast your child’s net as wide as possible to give the greatest choice.

Don’t discourage with comments like: “You’re not bright enough to do that” or “I thought you hated that subject”. It’s amazing what people can achieve when they want something, and many people are “late career developers”, growing into skills as they get older.

Most importantly of all, encourage your children in all aspects of their lives – school, home, hobbies, sport and part-time employment. The greatest gift you can give them is a belief in themselves.

**NO CAREER DECISION IS FINAL OR FATAL!** It’s OK not to know! A career is a journey, not a destination, so let’s enjoy the trip!

## Helpful Hints

- Ask your child questions that will help them to look at themselves. Focus on their interests, things they are good at, and their personal values about work.
- If your child doesn’t know what career they want, ask them to define broad areas of interest, such as helping people, or scientific work. Then encourage them to investigate lots of options within each field. Pursuing work or study in an area of interest is vital for maintaining satisfaction and getting through tough times.
- Discuss what your child needs or wants from their career. Attitudes to the need for money, security, or self-development vary from person to person.
- Try not to impose your ideas, but help by using questions that will clarify the issues. i.e. “This job doesn’t have much physical activity in it, and you’ve said that’s important to you. How much will that matter?”
- Point your children towards sources of information about careers and let them follow up. Encourage them to see their Careers Advisor and to look at websites like [www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers) or [www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz).

- Ask about the Career Education programme at school and urge your child to take part in work exploration, STAR or Gateway programmes or any tertiary visits that are available. These are a great opportunity to find out what a job or training course is really like.
- Encourage your child in any activity that develops skills. Many of the important transferable skills that employers look for are developed at school through the general curriculum. Skills are also gathered from part time or holiday jobs and from leisure or sporting activities. In the workforce, what people can do is often more important than the knowledge they hold.
- Discuss subject choice with your child each year. Which subjects will best suit their plans for the future? Do you agree with their reasoning? If you have concerns, sit down with their teacher, careers advisor or other staff, and find out what they think. Does the school know something you don't?
- Offer understanding and support through any periods of unemployment. This is a time that can eat away at self-esteem. Encourage your child to keep using and developing their skills in whatever activity holds their interest, even if you don't see any immediate paid work coming from it.

## Questions for parents to consider

### Have I encouraged work exploration?

- Open days, expos and career evenings
- Work site visits- using friends, relations and other contacts
- Reading and “Informational Interviewing” of employers for more information about a job or industry
- Talking to friends, neighbours and relations about their jobs
- Internet research about opportunities and courses
- Holiday, voluntary or part time work

### Is my child developing work related habits?

- Responsible attitudes
- Independence
- Enthusiasm
- Routines
- Social relationships
- Punctuality
- Dress sense
- Honesty
- Is my child learning skills from other sources and achieving a balance between work and leisure?
- Hobbies
- Clubs
- Social life
- Cultural groups
- Sport
- Reading

## Am I aware of these common problems in career planning?

- Choosing wrong subjects early
- Looking to the one “ ideal job”
- Feeling that planning is pointless
- Poorly developed face to face communication skills (too many computer games?)
- Influence from friends
- Limiting options too soon based on incorrect or incomplete information
- Lack of knowledge of where to start
- Too many choices/fear of making “wrong choice” so making NO decision!
- Pressure from school community or parents
- Insecurity and low self-esteem- “I could never do that”
- Other emotional problems

### Have I used the school contacts?

- Careers advisor
- Guidance counsellor
- Form teacher
- Transitions teacher
- Dean
- Mentor

## What are some good times to talk careers with my kids?

There are many opportunities in the course of everyday life for you to start career conversations with your kids. For example, if your child points out something that they would like to buy when they're older, you can start a conversation with questions like, "I wonder what someone has to do to afford that?" or "That's a great ..... what do you think the owner does?"

### In the car:

Often the only time to catch up with family members is when you're in the car on the way somewhere. This can be a great opportunity to have a quick chat to your kids about careers and dreams, and it can be easier for your child to talk to you, as all your attention is not on them. Keep the conversation casual and indirect.

- "If you could do any job in the world, what would it be?"
- "What would you like to do after you finish school?"

### Watching TV:

Some TV programmes will lend themselves to career conversations more easily than others. For example, shows like *Border Control*, *Police Ten 7*, *Shortland Street* or *New Zealand's Next Top Model* can give you the opportunity to talk about different types of careers. For example:

- *Police Ten 7*: "Wow, the police have to deal with some difficult people. I'm not sure I could do that job. What do you think?"
- *Shortland Street*: "I think this show gives you the wrong idea about what doctors and nurses actually do. I think everyone interested in these jobs should do some real-life work experience."

- *New Zealand's Next Top Model*: "These girls spend so much time practising! They seem willing to give up a lot of time to get into this career - I'm not sure I could be bothered, could you?"

### Over a meal:

Ease your way into the conversation. A lot of children might get defensive. Talk about your own experiences or observations to start the conversation - you don't have to talk about your child's situation; you can start with yourself or someone else.

- "The kid next door is starting an apprenticeship in carpet laying next year. I wonder how he came up with that?"
- "My parents talked me into being a teacher, but I would rather have tried landscaping. Hey, I might still do that!"
- "It can be scary to think you have to do the same job all your life. I know a lot of people who managed to do well after changing careers. Some have tried several different jobs."

### Playing sport or doing outdoor activities:

You may not want to "spoil" this quality time with your children by bringing up career or training plans.

Some possible starters for your conversations could be:

- "Wouldn't it be great to have a job outdoors? Especially on a day like today."
- "Being sporty helps make up for spending all week behind a desk!"

### At subject choice time:

Though you may not feel comfortable about helping your child with making subject choices, this is a good time to talk over their hopes for the future.

You don't have to make the decision for them, but ask open-ended questions like:

- "What subjects do you like doing? Why?"
- "What types of jobs can your favourite subject lead to?"
- "What's your dream job? What sorts of subjects would you need to do that?"
- "It's OK that you haven't decided what to do after school yet. Maybe you should keep your subject choices broad, to give you more options later."

### When your child has friends over:

Starting a career conversation with your child and their friends can take a lot of pressure out of the situation. You can start out by asking your child's friends about their ideas for the future. Your child can listen and you can express your ideas to their friends without sounding patronising.

It will also help prevent your child from feeling like they're being pressed into a corner.

Remember to ask your questions casually, and if the conversation doesn't go where you want it to, stop and try another time.

Possible questions you could ask your child's friends:

- "What are your favourite subjects? Why?"
- "What are your plans after you're done with school?"
- "Have you guys done any work experience before? What did you think about it?/Do you reckon it's a good way to see if you'd like a job?"

# Top 10 Skills / Attributes sought after in University Graduates by Employers

In 2012 over 500 employers in Australasia were asked by Graduate Careers Australia to rate which three selection criteria (in addition to relevant qualifications) they considered to be most important when evaluating graduates applying for positions within their organisations. When ranked these were the overall findings:

## Skills & attributes sought after:

1. Interpersonal & communication skills (both oral and written)
2. Drive & commitment / Industry knowledge
3. Critical reasoning & analytical skills / technical skills
4. Calibre of academic results
5. Cultural alignment / values fit
6. Work experience
7. Teamwork skills
8. Emotional intelligence (including self-awareness, confidence, motivation)
9. Leadership skills
10. Activities (including intra and extra-curricular)

Skills and attributes sought after by an employer can vary in level of importance depending on the position, industry and the organisation. Other skills and attributes may also be required by employers. Careers, Internships & Employment would encourage individuals to reflect on their skill & attribute development as they engage in university life, so they can provide examples of these in job applications & interviews.

# Questions for Informational Interviews

The purpose of an informational interview is to research a field of work that may interest you. It is a way to gain information on employment trends, skills required by employers, as well as confirm whether it is an area of work you are interested in pursuing or not.

As you are not interviewing for a job, it's up to you to ask the questions. Therefore, always go to an informational interview well prepared with questions. Even if it is very informal or spontaneous, you will get much more out of it if you put time into thinking about what you want to know.

To identify businesses or industries you could approach, you can use Careers, Internships & Employment Employer information, the Yellow Pages ([www.yellowpages.co.nz](http://www.yellowpages.co.nz)); the Universal Business Directory ([www.ubd.co.nz](http://www.ubd.co.nz)), the business and situations vacant pages of community and major daily newspapers, trade/industry magazines, the Internet or your own contacts – family, friends, clubs and associations you belong to.

Once you have identified some places to approach, do some research via their websites and/or look at any company/organisation literature so you are familiar with what they do prior to visiting them.

When you contact the company/organisation, find out the name of the Human Resources Manager and/or the name of the person who would be appropriate for you to speak to. You can then contact the appropriate person (via email, telephone or in writing) to ask whether they would be available to meet with you for 15-20 minutes to discuss your questions.

The following questions are a guide to some of the points you may want to discuss with the people you approach. Remember: use open ended questions that elicit more than a “yes” or “no” answer.

- How did you get into this type of work / this industry?
- What kind of background of education, skills and experience do people have who work in this field?
- What is a typical day in this job really like? What do you most enjoy about the work that you do? Least enjoy?
- What are the biggest challenges facing your sector? How do you think they will be tackled?
- Where do you see the opportunities for people to enter this sector now? What gaps need to be filled?
- What is the best way of finding out about jobs in this field?
- Do you know of anyone with a similar background to mine that has entered this type of work? Could I meet them?
- Can you recommend two other people that I should speak to?
- Would you mind looking at my CV and telling me if you think it's appropriate for the sector?
- What steps would you recommend I take at this point?
- Are there related fields/jobs you recommend I look into if there are few jobs available



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