

Discover your options

Careers, Internships & Employment

Should I stay in this programme of study?



Many students experience the feeling at some point that they might be in the wrong programme of study. This can be due to a number of factors. Ideally, the programme you choose to study will be well-matched with your unique personality, career path, needs and values. However, you may have enrolled without full understanding of all your options. Advice from others, personal factors in your life such as location, finances, or admission criteria may have influenced your choice.

Whatever the reasons, if you have doubts about your current programme, you need to investigate what is concerning you and make an informed decision about your next move.

Identify the reasons for your concern:

Personal factors

- Are personal issues affecting your ability to study e.g. family responsibilities, illness, financial constraints etc.?
- Do you feel more motivated to enter the workforce or focus on other aspects of your life right now?
- Is there a balance between work, study, family and leisure time?

- Are you unhappy where or with whom you're living?
- Are you having trouble keeping up with the demands of your programme?

Decision making

- Did you feel pressured into making a hasty decision? If so, what would you do differently next time?

- Do you have enough information about yourself and the world of work to make a more informed decision?
- Do you think you have good decision making skills? (These can be learned).
- Have you decided to change your career direction based on new information and experiences you've had?

Career choice and goals

- Have you chosen a field that is compatible to your areas of interests, values and strengths?
- Have you considered what you really need and want from your future career path?



Evaluate options

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- Do you have a good understanding of the employment options upon graduation?
- Who or what has influenced your career choice?
- Do you feel supported in pursuing your career goals?
- Have you considered that your career path may change and grow as you do?

Research/information gathering

- Do you know enough about the range of possibilities ahead of you or do you feel your options are limited?
- How broadly have you viewed the jobs your qualifications can lead to? Have you looked beyond the obvious jobs?
- Have you analyzed the skills you're currently gaining in your study?
- Have you spent sufficient time researching careers and the world of work?

A good support network can help you address your concerns and move forward. You may need help from others to manage aspects of your life that are affecting your level of satisfaction. Talk to people who know you (family/whanau, friends, tutors) to gain support and new ideas about yourself and your studies.

If you are unsure about your career choices and goals, talk with a career consultant: http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers/career_options/advice.shtml If you have a health or personal issue impacting on your programme of study, contact the UC Health Centre for counselling or medical assistance: www.canterbury.ac.nz/healthcentre/

If you are having trouble keeping up with the demands of a course or your overall programme of study, speak to

your lecturer or tutor, and contact the Academic Skills Centre for support with your writing and study strategies: www.lps.canterbury.ac.nz/lsc/ Contact Student Services to access additional support services also: www.canterbury.ac.nz/student/

Positive aspects of your study so far

- Acknowledge the positive aspects and knowledge you have gained from your experience. It may have been a good starting point for you.
- Acknowledge the transferable skills you have gained that can be taken to other study or work situations. E.g. ability to work in a team, organise information effectively and relate to a wide range of people etc.
- Acknowledge the papers you have done well and enjoyed. This may give clues to your future direction. Papers completed may be transferable to other qualifications.
- Recognise that discovering aspects you **don't** enjoy often clarifies what you **do** want.

Benefits of completing your current semester or year

- You will have gained a sense of achievement by completing your papers.
- You will have the satisfaction of gaining value for the time and money you have already invested.
- You will have demonstrated the ability to persevere under challenging circumstances (a good career management skill to develop and one valued by employers).
- If you are close to finishing, you may find it worthwhile to complete the qualification, and use it to open doors to higher level study that would bring you greater satisfaction and closer to your career goals.

Making a change requires action

- Analyse why you are dissatisfied and recognise the changes you need to make.
- Consider the financial implications of your decision to change. Will you have to repay a student allowance, loan, or scholarship?
- Consider the impact on your immigration status if you are an international student. Talk to Student Support. See: <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/support/>
- Be informed about the deadlines for making changes to courses and the programme of study you are enrolled in.
- Discuss the content of the *whole* qualification with your lecturer, college major student advisors or a career consultant to get a wider picture of the qualification, rather than totally focus on the courses you are currently completing. An overview could broaden your current thinking.
- Changing from a paper you dislike, selecting a different major, reducing your workload or managing other aspects of university life could make a positive difference.
- Talk to others about the aspect of study you find difficult. There may be practical solutions e.g. peer tutoring, academic support, a mentor, etc. University study does require consistent effort and persistence to make it a positive experience.
- Discuss new career directions with a career consultant and check out the study options involved in making a change of direction.
- Find out if your papers can be transferred to other programmes of interest to you.
- Make an appointment with a career consultant to help you decide what action to take.

Source: The University of Canterbury acknowledges the AUT Career Services www.aut.ac.nz/student_services/career_centre/ for the use of this handout. It has been adapted in parts for students & graduates at the University of Canterbury.