

While the culture in many graduate programs operates under the assumption that students will continue within the academic sphere, we understand that this is not always the case. Interests and priorities may shift and options outside academe may become more interesting. Following the process described below will ensure you consider and understand the options available to you.

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO EXPLORE

One of the largest initial barriers to exploring options outside of academia is a psychological one. Given the familiarity with, and emphasis on, the academic route, admitting to yourself and others that you may be exploring a different path can be difficult. We see this difficulty compounded by fears of making the wrong choice, disappointing family and colleagues, uncertainty about other options, lack of familiarity with job search protocol, and uncertainty about where one's skills may fit. Choosing to explore non-academic careers can be a daunting choice; however, experience shows that those who make an informed decision to leave academia tend to find the move both satisfying and liberating.

A recent Statistics Canada survey found that Masters and Doctorate graduates enjoyed a higher income than graduates of both Bachelors and college programs *. This indicates that, far from "wasted" time as it is sometimes feared, those who choose to leave academia are well prepared for employment opportunities both in and out of the post secondary setting.

This same study indicated that those with a Masters degree experienced lower unemployment rates than those with Doctorate or Bachelors degrees and that the salary difference between those with Masters and Doctorate degrees was minimal. This might be particularly salient for those of you considering terminating your degree at the Masters level. Far from negatively impacting your employability or income opportunities, completing your studies at the Masters level, when executed strategically, can be a benefit to your career.

PREPARE YOURSELF

Ask yourself: Finding satisfying work requires honest answers to what appear to be simple questions; still, it is not uncommon for students to progress from one academic level to another without considering the cornerstones of career decisions: skills, interests, personality and values. Take the time to ask yourself: what do I really want from my career; what distinguishes me; what do I enjoy doing most; when does 'time fly' for me; what's important to me in a workplace? These questions require you to focus on yourself and articulate your priorities. Our Career Counsellors are trained to help students explore careers, make decisions, and prepare for the job search. For assistance make an appointment by contacting our front desk at 905.828.5451 or coming into the Career Centre at DV 3094.

Know yourself. Review your experiences, paid and unpaid, academic and non-academic. What skills or qualities stand out? Which would you like to use in your career? Use our skills inventory (available through a Career Counsellor) for help making a comprehensive list of the skills you both have and want to develop. Work, volunteering, hobbies, or academics, all of your skills will help you gain entry to a variety of workplaces and careers. Think about the values you hold, the things that are important to your satisfaction and list these too. As you commit your answers to paper, you may see patterns and themes emerge to point you in new directions.

Know your market. The next step is to think about what companies, organizations, ministries, and associations may exist that could use someone with your expertise. You have the primary skill needed to gather this information: research. Talk to faculty, make note of industry partners you may have worked with throughout your education, familiarize yourself with our online job posting system to find out who has hired people like you in the past, attend job fairs and employer seminars to connect with employee representatives, talk to UTM alumni, and meet with a Career Counsellor for guidance in navigating this process of exploring non-academic options. The Career Centre provides occupational information both online and through our Career Library. Visit us in DV 3094 for help navigating our resources.

* "Graduating in Canada: Profile, labour market outcomes and student debt of the class of 2005" Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics: Research Papers, 2007

PREPARE YOUR NETWORK

As roughly 80% of all jobs come through networking, the development and maintenance of contacts are an essential element of your job search. In addition, talking to contacts allows you to further your research and understand where your best fit is.

Networking is essentially the development and maintenance of contacts. These could be contacts from previous job/internship experiences, conferences attended, associations joined, industry partners you've worked with throughout your education, contacts made through faculty, friends and family and, finally, contacts you initiate yourself.

To build your network:

- Ask your faculty, friends, and family if they know anyone in the industries, companies or areas you are interested in learning more about
- Collect business cards at conferences or association meetings and keep in periodic contact with those you connected with
- Check out UTM's alumni database to see if there is someone working in an area that interests you and talk to them.
- Attend information sessions and career panels organized by the Career Centre to learn more about opportunities off campus and build connections with company representatives.

While some of the on-campus opportunities may be targeted to undergraduate students, this is due more to numbers than opportunity. Don't ignore the opportunities to connect with employers on campus, drop by the events and use the opportunity to explore options for someone with your expertise. Check out our tipsheet on networking for more details, www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/networking.html

PREPARE YOUR JOB SEARCH

Applying for a job in industry can be quite different from applying for academic positions. Highly qualified applicants may rule themselves out of the competition by not following job search protocol. Following is a brief overview of steps to follow in your preparation. Note that our Career Counsellors and Employment Advisors are here to offer support throughout.

Prepare your resume and cover letter: In academia, a multiple page CV and a two-page cover letter is the norm. Non-academic employers look for concise documents that clearly exhibit your knowledge of the business and your unique ability to address the needs of the employer. Resumes are limited to two pages, cover letters to one page and both documents are targeted to specific openings as opposed to generic form documents. Review our samples online in our "Resume Toolkit" and make an appointment for a Resume Critique to have your documents reviewed.

Prepare a list of organizations to target: This will be an ongoing task as opposed to a one-time event. Organizations will have different needs at different times, a company without openings today may find themselves with several openings next month. Your job is to develop lists of possibilities and make contact in person (as opposed to simply forwarding a resume) to explore opportunities and maintain periodic contact with companies of interest to be informed of new possibilities. This expands your network.

Practice your interview skills: Discussing your research and experience in ways that make sense to a layperson and address the opening's needs can be challenging. During the course of your education, take every opportunity to present, teach, or simply speak with others to develop your communication skills. As you prepare for your job search take advantage of our interview tipsheets, workshops, and mock interview sessions. Don't wait until you are in front of a potential employer to practice marketing your skills and experience to others.

The process of choosing a new career direction and finding satisfying employment is challenging. Your graduate degree can be a great asset if you take the time to understand what you have to offer, where the best fit might be and learn effective job search strategies. The Career Centre will support you through this process, so don't hesitate to come in or call us with your questions and concerns.