



GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MAJOR

CAREER PLANNING PROCESS

It is important to note that career planning is a cycle. It is not a one-time process. Some people move forward and then back; some go all the way through and then need to “start over.”

There are four steps to the career planning process. These are shown in the picture below. Whether you have taken zero credit hours at this point, or you are in your third year and have declared and changed your major multiple times, these steps will guide you to a solid and informed decision.



STEP ONE: SELF-ASSESS

The first step in making an informed academic or career choice is for you to understand yourself. You may do this informally by talking with academic advisors, career counselors, professors, family members, and friends.

This process can also be done more formally through our self-assessment tools. These tools merely offer suggestions, not answers, for you to consider when selecting a major or career path. You will set-up an appointment to meet with a career counselor to determine which of the tools may be right for you and then later meet to discuss results.

STEP TWO: EXPLORE & RESEARCH OPTIONS

You will begin exploring major options and potential careers that best meet your needs. You should collect information from a variety of sources. Once you explore your options, it’s time to begin narrowing them down and learning about the careers you are considering.

Online Resources

- [What Can I Do With This Major?](#) – Provides information on career options and types of industry employers based on major.
- [O*NET](#) – Database that includes information on skills, abilities, knowledge, work activities, and interests associated with thousands of occupations.
- [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) – Guide to career information for hundreds of occupations developed and provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

STEP TWO: EXPLORE & RESEARCH OPTIONS (CONT.)

Job Shadowing

- Identify individuals with the related major/occupation/company/industry you would like to learn more about and contact them. The vast majority of the time these people would love to share what they do with interested students.

Volunteering

- Visit the UCO Volunteer & Service Learning Center for more information on opportunities to volunteer in a variety of different fields.

Informational Interviews

- Arrange a time to interview contacts in the field.
- Attend Major Quest in the fall semester to speak with faculty from every department across campus about their majors and the occupations/opportunities associated with them.

STEP THREE: REFLECT & DECIDE

- Begin to identify what is important to you in a career or major.
- Identify roadblocks or obstacles.
- Consider how you feel about the education requirements (beyond an undergraduate degree).
- Visit with the professionals on campus who may or may not teach. For example, if you are interested in graphic design, speak with one of the UCO graphic designers. Remember, a university campus is a small city, and many people practice their professions in their roles at UCO.
- Allow time to reflect.
- Meet with a career counselor. Just remember that career planning is a process; it often takes more than one appointment. Different stages in the process may require different types of assistance. Because of this, it is important to set realistic expectations of what will happen when meeting with a career counselor, and that it may take multiple appointments to fully address your needs.

STEP FOUR: PLAN & TAKE ACTION

Set Goals

- Establish short-term and long-term goals.
- Write these down, review, and update as needed.

Declare/Change Your Major

- Discuss your plan with those that need to know, such as family members and advisors.
- Declare a major once you have found one that interests you and will meet your goals.
- Change your major if you already have one declared that does not line up with your goals.

Gain Experience

- Work towards goals and identify skills needed.
- Build a resume using Optimal Resume or by following our *Resume Writing Guide*.
- Attend career related events like career fairs, Career Chats, forums, and mock interview days.
- Utilize HireBronchos.

Prepare for Graduate or Professional School (if you plan to attend)

- Understand the application process and explore programs.
- Determine qualifications needed (curriculum vita, resume, professional statements, entrance exams, etc.).