

# Managing Your Career: Strategies for Graduates with Disabilities

## Module 1: Career Planning

### **Slide 1: Welcome to Managing Your Career: Strategies for Graduates with Disabilities.**

This presentation was developed by the Academic Advising & Career Centre in partnership with AccessAbility Services to help students with disabilities transition from university to the world of work. My name is Shayna Golding and I am a Career Counsellor at the Academic Advising and Career Centre at the University of Toronto Scarborough. I will be co presenting this presentation with my colleague Cheryl Lepard, Disability Consultant with AccessAbility Services.

**Slide 2:** This presentation has been divided into 6 modules. The first module explains career planning, the second module will assist you to understand employment equity policies, the third module addresses employment barriers, the fourth module deals with disclosure and the fifth module describes workplace accommodations. Finally the sixth module will provide links to resources for employers and students.

### **Slide 3: Module 1 Career Planning.**

**Slide 4: Agenda.** In this module we will be reviewing at the career planning process while adopting a strengths-based approach to self assessment, review tools for researching and exploring the world of work, highlight the roles of networking and mentorship, provide some targeted job search resources, discuss alternative work arrangements and finally providing some tips for career planning.

**Slide 5: The Career Planning Process.** Career Planning is a process and it takes time. It is a cyclical process as people tend to engage and disengage in this process at various times throughout their life span. You can start anywhere on the circle but we will start at the top of the circle in self assessment. Self assessment is about you! It involves looking inward towards ones skills, values, interests and personality to help you gain a better understanding of your strengths, challenges and needs. The second phase is research and exploration. It involves looking outwards towards the world of work to gain a better understanding of various occupations. Students and recent graduates are often most familiar with the more common occupations such as doctor, lawyer, nurse, teacher, engineer. However, the world of work is so much more diverse and there are so many occupations to choose from. It is important to explore your options test them out by volunteering or job shadowing. Learn about the specific duties and functions of the occupations to decide whether it is a good fit for you. In this phase you are gathering information about labour market trends and industry sectors. You may also want to research employment equity policies which will be discussed more in module 2. The third phase is evaluation and decision making. In this phase, we are really just synthesizing the information that we learned from looking inward towards oneself and from looking outward towards the world of work to evaluate and make some decisions. The fourth phase, implementation involves

the actual job search. It also involves putting forth applications to advertised positions, networking and conducting informational interviews. For some students their job goal may involve further education, certification or training and in this phase they may be actively seeking those opportunities as well and applying for further education programs. The last phase is adjustment and re-evaluation. This involves examining your progress, expectations and remaining open to adjusting and re-evaluating your goals. This cycle really provides a structure for the presentation. I am going to be walking you through each of the phases and discussing each one more in depth.

**Slide 6: Discover Your Strengths.** Consider your skills, interests, values and personal qualities and focus on your strengths. Too often we focus our energy and attention to the thing or the areas that we are the least confident in and that challenge us the most. Students with disabilities often describe feeling particularly anxious about how their disability will impact them in the job. Understanding your areas of challenge and identifying strategies that work for you will be key to your success. However, keep in mind that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. It is important to understand what your strengths are and how you can use them in the world of work. Think about times in your life when you felt particularly proud, energized and happy. What were you doing? Are there challenges, obstacles or barriers that you have overcome? What skills did you use to do this? What personal qualities helped you to overcome this challenge? Perhaps it was persistence, resilience or having a positive attitude.

**Slide 7: Consider Your Interests.** Are there specific populations that you want to work with? Consider populations such as children, youth, women, older adults, LGBTQ, ethnic minority groups, mental health patients, other specific populations. Do your interests involve working with people at all? This is important to consider. Work environments are also important to think about. Consider environments such as schools, hospitals, courtrooms/ prisons, laboratories, universities/colleges, community centres and corporate offices. Industry sectors such as government, education, healthcare, business/professional services, consulting, advertising, marketing and community services are also other important considerations. You may also want to consider the geographic location of the work.

**Slide 8: Assess Yourself.** Psycho-educational assessments, neurological assessments and medical documentation may help you to gain a better understanding of your strengths and areas of difficulties. Meeting with a Career Counsellor and completing a career inventory can help you to generate career options. Some of the assessment inventories that we use include the Strong Interest Inventory, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and our Online Self Assessment. You can learn more information about these inventories on the Academic Advising & Career Centre website.

**Slide 9: Research and Explore the World of Work.** We are moving into that second phase on the cycle that I mentioned earlier. Conducting occupational research is a key component of your career planning. Here I have listed a couple of tools to help you with that. Career Cruising is a wonderful tool that can assist you in conducting occupational research. U of T students have

access to Career Cruising through their Career Centre Online account. You can simply go to [www.careers.utoronto.ca](http://www.careers.utoronto.ca) and login with your UTOR ID and password and then select Career Cruising from the left hand menu. Career Cruising provides detailed job descriptions for over 450 occupations in Canada. It also provides information about average salary and links to educational programs for that particular career path. The National Occupational Classification System (NOC) is the way in which occupations are organized in Canada. It provides detailed occupational information. Another important aspect to consider when conducting occupational research is labour market and industry trends. You can do so by visiting Industry Canada and Employment Ontario websites. It is important to understand employment equity policies as well and this topic will be discussed further in module 2. Finally, explore your options through job shadowing and volunteering. This will provide you with additional perspective about what this particular career path would be like and help you to decide whether it is a good fit for you. UTSC students have access to a great program called the EXTERN job shadowing program where they can be matched with a professional in their field of interest to engage in a job shadowing opportunity. Information about volunteer opportunities can also be found on the Career Centre Online.

**Slide 10: Evaluation & Decision Making.** Evaluation and decision making involves combining the information that you have learned from conducting self assessment with the information that you gathered by researching and exploring the world of work and using this information to clarify your career goals both long term and short term.

**Slide 11: Implementation.** In this phase you are really taking steps towards your goals, gaining additional qualifications or experiences, actively job searching, targeting your resume and applying for work opportunities and networking.

**Slide 12: Networking.** What is networking? Networking is the single most powerful tool you have to find work. It is a process of building relationships and contacts in order to further your career goals. It is a great way to research various occupations. Conducting informational interviews can help you to network while gathering career specific information. For those of you that are not familiar with the term informational interviewing, we have a tip sheet on this topic on the Academic Advising & Career Centre website and we have provided a direct link to that PDF.

**Slide 13: Work Your Network.** You already have a network of friends, classmates, professors, family and neighbors. Many students find the process of networking to be intimidating. It is important to understand what networking is really about and recognize that you already have established a network. It is important to tell your network about your career goals even if they are not working in your field of interest as they may know someone that will be able to help you. It is important to explore what they know as well as they may be able to link you with some additional resources or people in your area of interest. Remember casual, informal networking happens daily in your life at the hair salon, the supermarket, on the subway etc so you want to be

sure to let others know that you are job searching and let them know about your career goals. You always want to be open, curious and courteous to everyone you meet and leave a good impression wherever you go. You should also be looking for ways that you can assist others in achieving their career goals.

**Slide 14: Build Your Network.** Ways to build your network include using the Career Centre Online as a listing of alumni profiles and networking contacts are provided here. You can also attend job fairs and recruitment events. Join professional associations and volunteer. Attending charity events and fundraisers can also be a great way to meet new people. Utilize directories and consider social networking opportunities through Facebook, Linked-In. However, it is important to be cautious of your online presence.

**Slide 15: Identify Mentors.** Mentoring relationships can be a key component of your career success. Connecting with more experienced person in your field of interest can assist you to make career-related decisions and provide you with tips and strategies, insider information, support and guidance. UTSC has a mentoring program for students to help them transition from student life to work life called “Partners in Leadership.” You may also want to consider other mentoring programs specifically for students and recent graduates with disabilities. You can learn more about mentorship programs in the resources section of module 6.

**Slide 16: Utilize Targeted Job Search Boards.** [Ability Edge](#) provides paid internship opportunities for post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities. [Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work \(CCRW\)](#) offers programs and services for all aspects of the employment of persons with disabilities. [JOIN](#) (The Ontario Job Opportunity Information Network for Persons with Disabilities) is a network of 22 community agencies in Toronto that assist people living with disabilities to find and maintain employment.

**Slide 17: Utilize Targeted Job Search Boards.** Here are a few more. [JVS Toronto \(Ability Works\)](#) assists persons with mental health, developmental, learning and physical disabilities, injuries or illnesses to transition to employment. [Link Up](#) offers assistance with needs assessments, job development and placement, employment action plans and finally the [Ontario March of Dimes](#) provides employment preparation, job placement and training.

**Slide 18: Adjustment & Re-Evaluation.** The final phase in the career planning process is Adjustment and re-evaluation. Keep in mind that it may be important to re-evaluate and adjust your goal from time to time as I mentioned earlier that career planning is a process that takes time. This phase involves maintaining a positive attitude and recognizing that all experiences can be beneficial as they enable opportunity for career exploration, skill building, making contacts, gaining industry and occupational exposure as well as a stepping stone to your next career move.

**Slide 19: Considering Alternatives.** This is really a part of the adjustment and re-evaluation phase. As you are adjusting and re-evaluating your goals you may also want to consider alternatives. Alternative work arrangements are becoming increasingly common. Work

arrangements such as part-time work, job sharing, casual work, self-employment, contract work or telework may be a great option depending on your circumstances. Understand the demands of your family as well as your own needs and make your health and well being a priority. Balance your social life with work demands and determine what options are best for you.

**Slide 20: Resources.** Here are some great resources to assist you. Meet with a Career Counsellor or Employment Coach. Register with the Recent Graduate Employment Service. Get your resume critiqued. Sharpen your interview skills. Attend a Workshop such as Discover Your Skills and Career Options, Networking, Interview Strategies, Winning Resumes & Cover Letters.

**Slide 21: Final Thoughts on Career Planning.** Know yourself or get to know yourself better as this is an important piece in clarifying your career goals. Focus on your strengths as you are going through this process. Conduct research as it is really important to know the breadth and range of opportunities that are available to you. Explore your options and test them out. You want to try your ideas out by job shadowing and volunteering to learn if something that seems like a good fit really is a good fit. Clarify your career goals. Often students that are seeking work opportunities are unsure of what type of work they want to secure and the career planning process is very important in helping them to target your job search. Network, network, and network more! This is a very important job search as well as career planning tool. Identify mentors that can assist you along the way as they can certainly be instrumental to you success. Maintain a positive attitude and celebrate your success. Finally, be open to making adjustments and considering alternatives.

**Slide 22: Recap.** This concludes our first module on career planning. Please keep in mind that many aspects of career planning are similar for all students. As we move through the next 5 modules we will be addressing and examining issues that are more specific for students with disabilities such as understanding employment equity, addressing employment barriers, dealing with disclosure, workplace accommodations and resources for employers and students.

**Slide 23:** Thank you for reviewing this module. If you would like to provide feedback or if you have questions or concerns, please contact Shayna Golding [golding@utsc.utoronto.ca](mailto:golding@utsc.utoronto.ca) or Cheryl Lepard [clepard@utsc.utoronto.ca](mailto:clepard@utsc.utoronto.ca)