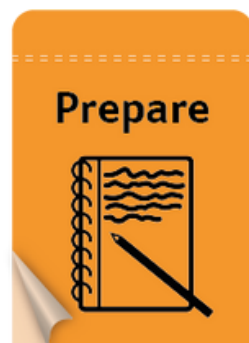


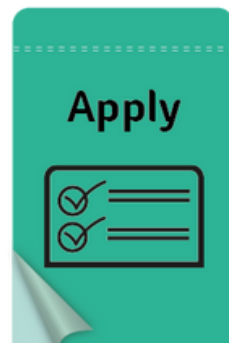
Explore



Decide



Prepare



Apply



Develop



Reflection
and
Resilience

Butterfly Effect

A Self-help Tool

Introduction

Like it or not, luck plays a large part in our careers. Understanding the role that chance plays helps us to take a more effective approach to career planning, and cope with the uncertainties of life. It also encourages us to try making our own luck by taking some calculated risks, and expanding our comfort zone.

This Self-help Tool uses the Butterfly Model, developed by Borg et al. (2006), which shows the role that chance events play in our career stories. It is based on the idea from Chaos Theory that a small change in a complex system can lead to a much larger effect, like a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon jungle causing a storm on the other side of the world.

This tool is designed to...

- Reveal the important part that luck has played in your career journey.
- Show that plans and chance affect each other.
- Encourage you to embrace the unpredictable nature of life.

Consider using this tool if you...

- Want to understand your career journey and how you got to be where you are today.
- Think you should try to control every aspect of your career.
- Want to understand how you can harness chance to help your career plans.

The classic version of this exercise asks you to draw two interlinking circles that look like two butterfly wings, but we've adapted it to allow for more complex interplay of events.



How to use this tool

1 Identify the key events in your career journey

Begin by quickly jotting down as many events, decisions and plans as you can think of that have shaped your career journey to date. These might be things you have decided (like which BTECs to do), things you have done (interests you've developed), as well as events and decisions made by others (e.g. your family might have moved house; a relative might have fallen ill, forcing you to alter your plans).

2 Categorise these key points

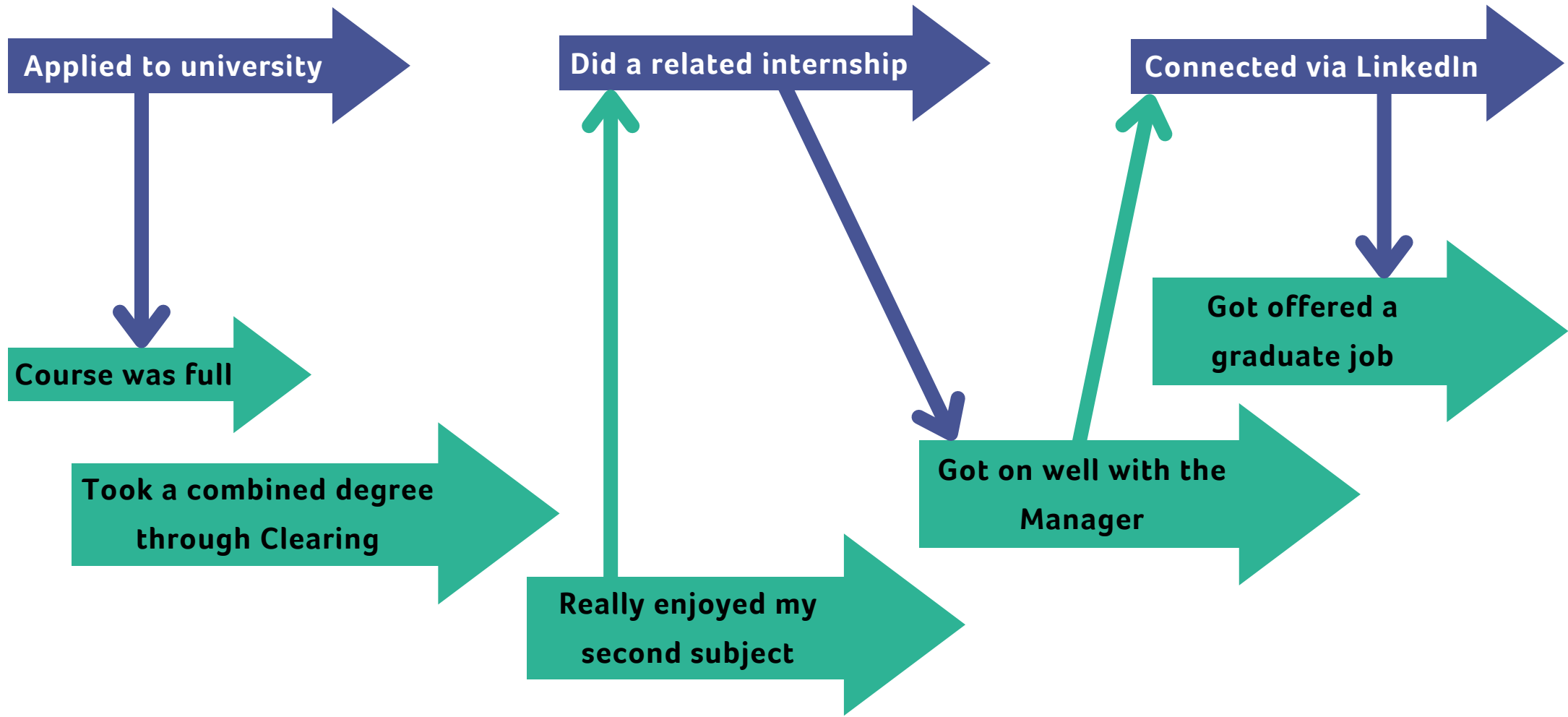
Use one colour/font to mark things you controlled or planned, and then use a different colour/font for the things that were beyond your control because they were due to chance or luck.

You can add a symbol like a plus sign (+) or a minus sign (-) next to each one, to show if it had a basically positive or negative impact on you, if that's helpful.

3 Organise your material

Now decide which event you will use to start your career journey (you can go back as far as you want). It can be something which was planned or accidental – it's up to you.

Organise your material into two lines. Put planned events on the top, and accidental ones lower down. Use vertical arrows (pointing downwards or upwards) to connect the two, showing the line of causality. You will end up with something like the simplified example below.



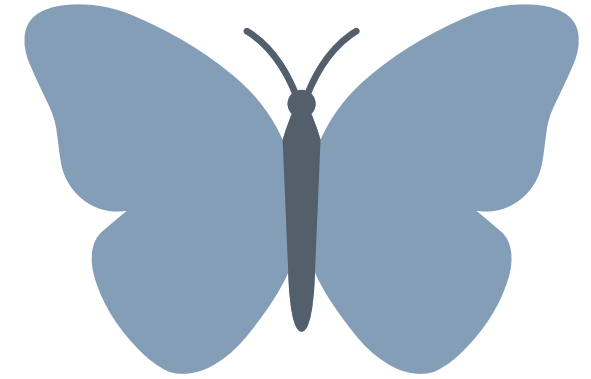
The example shown was made using Canva, but any software you like using is fine, such as PowerPoint or Visio. Or, you can draw your chart by hand on a landscape sheet of paper, if you prefer.

Reflective questions to ask yourself:

- How big a part has chance played in your career story so far?
- Are all chance events completely outside of your control, or are there some which you were able to influence?
- Where has chance helped you?
- Where has chance been a problem?
- Was it obvious at the time what the impact (positive or negative) of chance would be, or did this emerge later?
- Where has planning helped you?
- Where has planning been a problem?
- What do you notice about the patterns of chance and planning?
- Are there moments where planning and chance interact and work together positively?
- Would you be the person you are today without the role of chance in your life?
- Having completed this exercise, how do you now feel about chance/luck, and planning?
- Can you think of things you might do to make good luck more likely for you?

Pause, Reflect, Act

- What are the key insights you've taken from this Self-help Tool?
- What actions do you need to take now, to build on this exercise?
- Who could help you with this?
- Are there other, related Self-help Tools you'd like to use as well?



NB: Because everyone is different, no one solution is a magic bullet, so please look at our other Self-help Tools as well, and use the ones that work best for you.

Other tools which you can use to look at chance and uncertainty include:

- Lucked Out! – how to create your own luck using 'planned happenstance'.
- Sea of Unknowing – understanding the part that uncertainty plays in life.
- Go with the Flow – how to manage making job applications if you are still trying to choose between two career ideas.



References and Resources

Borg, T., Bright, J., & Pryor, R. (2006). The Butterfly Model of careers: Illustrating how planning and chance can be integrated in the careers of secondary school students. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 15(3), 54– 59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/103841620601500311>

D. Stanbury, 2023



If you are a member of staff from another educational organisation and want to use a limited number of our Self-help Tools with your students, we would love to hear from you and share good practice. We would ask that you retain references to University of Huddersfield as a matter of courtesy, and acknowledge the other sources we have used. Thank you.