

Expectations Under the Microscope

A self-help tool

Introduction

The expectations that other people have for our careers can be challenging to handle. We may feel pulled in different directions, or even pushed towards a path we feel uncomfortable taking. Which fits with your values?

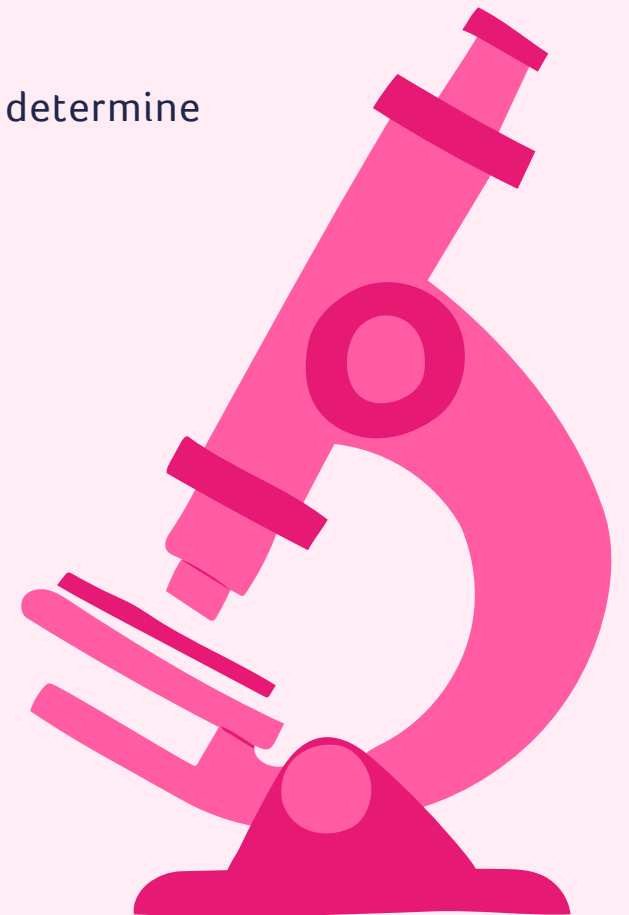
This exercise provides a simple way to compare different expectations and consider how far each one expresses your personal values. It is based on the 'ACT Bullseye' reflective tool by Tobias Lundgren which we've adapted.

This tool is designed to...

- Help you compare different career paths that people expect you to take.
- Help you acknowledge the different directions you are being expected to take.
- Help you analyse how far each career expresses your values, so you can determine which is best for you.

Consider using this tool if you...

- Feel pulled in different directions by other people's expectations.
- Need to choose between different career paths.
- Want to test how far different careers meet your core values.



How to use this tool

First, think about your values.

Look through the list of 24 values from the VIA Character Strengths system (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These are ‘life values’ that can affect career choice. Mark those you identify with strongly. All of these are ‘positive’ values. Pick as many as you like from any theme. Use the bottom row to add your own values, expressed in own way.

| Themes | VIA Character Strengths | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Wisdom | Creativity | Curiosity | Judgement | Love of learning | Perspective |
| Courage | Bravery | Perseverance | Honesty | Zest | |
| Humanity | Love | Kindness | Social Intelligence | | |
| Justice | Teamwork | Fairness | Leadership | | |
| Temperance | Forgiveness | Humility | Prudence | Self-regulation | |
| Transcendence | Appreciation of beauty and excellence | Gratitude | Hope | Humour | Spirituality |
| Other | | | | | |

Now look at this list of ‘work values’ which we’ve adapted from Schein (1978, 1990). These highlight aspects of careers that people value. Mark any from this list that resonate with you.

| I really value a career where I can... | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Become a technical expert | Become a manager | Enjoy autonomy and independence | Have career stability and security |
| Be entrepreneurial and / or creative | Make a difference to others by serving others. | Tackle tough problems and extreme challenges | Meet my wider lifestyle priorities (e.g. for travel, family / leisure time) |

Finally, consider if there are other values that are important to you which you haven’t listed so far. These may be expressed in a very individual way. For example: ‘proving them wrong’; ‘staying true to my roots’; ‘being a trail blazer’; or ‘doing my own thing’. These ‘life rules’ are important for you to listen to.

Second, list the career paths that different people expect you to take.


List all the different careers that you are actively considering, either because they appeal and / or other people have suggested them to you.

Next, categorise these according to where the expectation comes from or the type of career path it offers. To help you can use the prompt boxes below. If a prompt doesn't apply to you, just miss the box out. You can add you own prompt boxes as well. Try to be as concrete as possible. For instance, if you know that your manager at Tesco thinks you should train to be Supervisor at Tesco, write that down. Write your answers in the shaded cells.

| The career my best friend thinks I should do. | The career my siblings expect me to do | The career my parents expect me to do | The career my tutors expect me to do | The career my manager at work expects me to do |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| | | | | |
| The career my careers advisor suggested to consider | The 'safe and sensible' career choice | The career I'd do if money were no object | The career of my dreams | The 'compromise' career |
| | | | | |

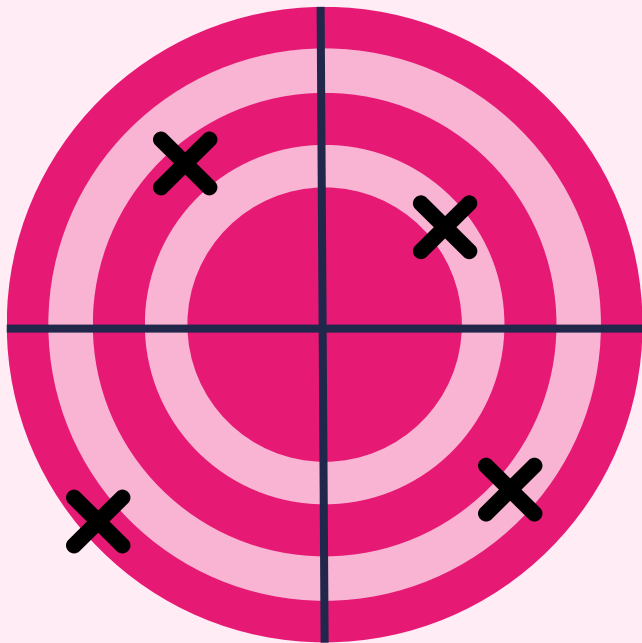
Third, identify up to 4 careers you want to focus on.

It's up to you how you select these. Consider which careers are upper-most in your mind at this moment.

- Which ones feel most pressing?
 - Which ones are you actively discussing with your family and friends?
 - Do you feel torn?
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Fourth, put your 4 career ideas under ‘the microscope’.

The image represents your core values (the ones you identified in the first step). The closer to the centre, the more something fully expresses your values. Take each of the 4 careers you want to focus on, and put an X in each of the quadrants, showing how far that career expresses your values. One career in each quadrant. Remember that a career will have implications for your wider life; where you live; how much you earn; the sort of work-life balance you have; your wider family or community life. Take these factors into account as well. The closer the X is to the middle, the closer to your inner values. Label each career.



Next to each, explain why you have put the X where you have. If the X is close to the centre, which values does the career express? What does that value mean in the context of career choice? If the X is closer to the edge, why have you put it there? What values does it conflict with? Most careers options will express several values, but possibly some more strongly than others. Are some values more important to you when choosing a career? If so which ones?

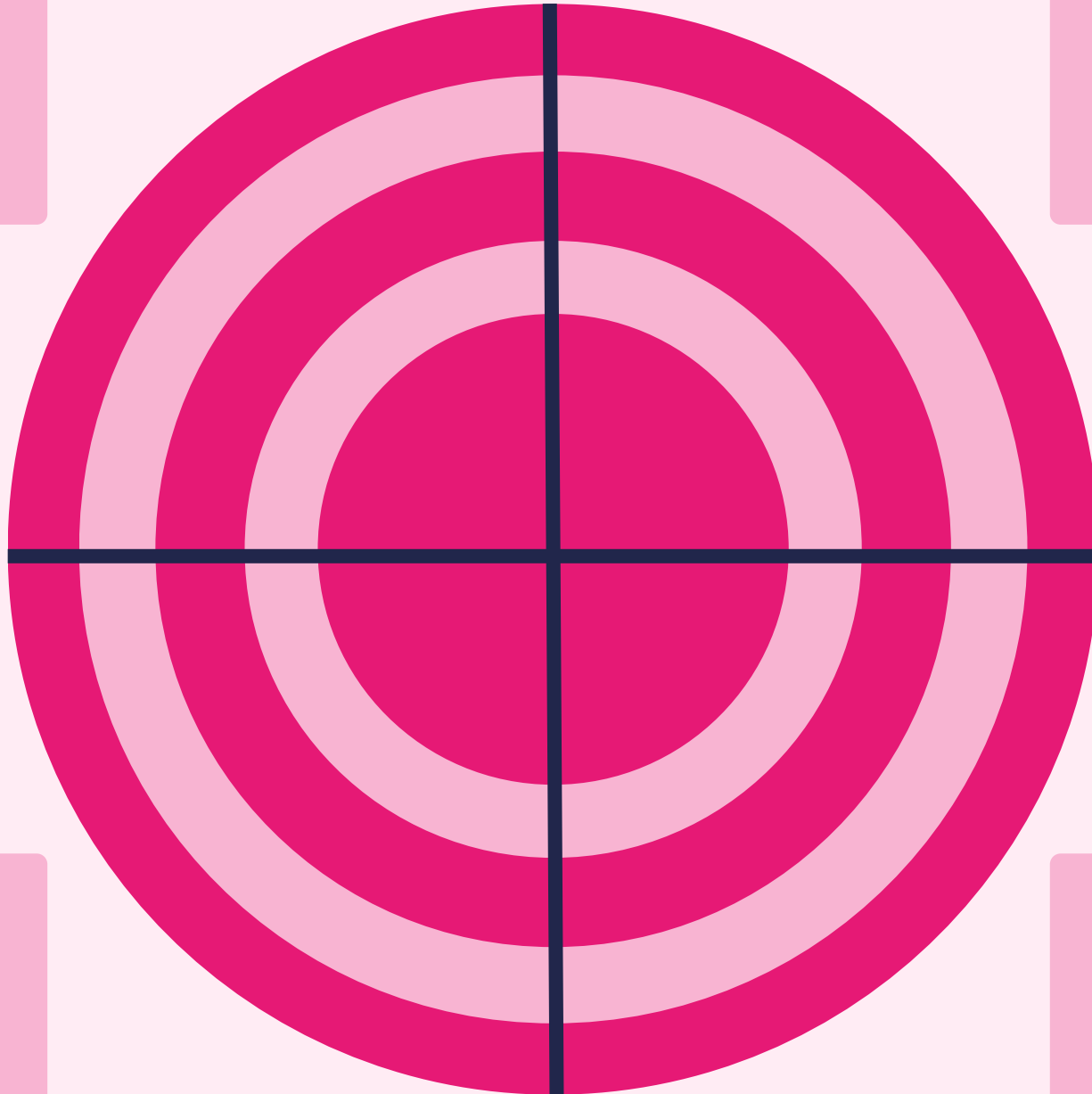
Now do it yourself!

Career 1

Career 2

Career 3

Career 4



Pause, Reflect, Act

- What do you notice about the different choices and expectations?
- What surprised you from this exercise?
- What are the key insights you've learnt?
- What practically do you want to do now to take forward the insights from this exercise?
- Who could help you with this?
- Which other self-help tools would you like to look at next?

NB: Because everyone is different and no one solution on its own is necessarily a magic bullet, please look at our other self-help tools as well and use the ones that work best for you.

References and Resources

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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'd love to hear from you and share good practice. We'd ask that you retain references to University of Huddersfield as a matter of courtesy and acknowledge the other sources we've used. Thank you.