DECISION MAKING MODELS
Target what you value

Rational decision making can help you see things in a more systematic or logical way. This approach allows you to weigh up your options by analysing information and facts. In essence the decision is made by removing the emotional element.

Here’s how you can use this approach.

Bullseye or Target Exercise (designed by Tobias Lundgren)

This exercise can provide clarity on what is most important to you. Sometimes you can have many things that are important and it’s difficult to see where they all fit in. This activity is a great way to visual your wants and needs. The closer you place factors to the centre or the ‘bullseye’, the closer it aligns to your values and wants.
Here’s an example. Russell has been applying for several job roles. One is related to his environmental studies and another is a promotion at work. What option should Russell pick?

**Offer 1. An environmental education adviser**
- A chance to put studies to practice
- Would be good to develop relevant skills
- Support a change in career
- Reduced salary
- Temporary position

**Offer 2. Promotion at work**
- Increased salary
- Permanent position
- In a different sector and role to career goals
- More responsibility
You can modify the bullseye exercise to decide what options are best for you. Below are two bullseye diagrams that you can use to weigh up a decision you are facing.

1. Place all the factors within the bullseye
2. Place the items most important closer to the centre

Option 1

Option 2
Use your instincts

This decision-making technique can appeal to those who like to follow their intuition and feelings about an option. For those who create a complex visualisation of what they are considering, it can generate an instinctive reaction to move towards or away from that option.

The dilemma below provides an example of how you can use your instincts to make the right decision for you.

**Dilemma**
Should I take a job as a Mental Health Support Worker for a charity?

**Visualisation**
Imagine you have accepted the job. You are already employed by the organisation and you are running a group support session with your clients.

Spend some time developing a specific visual image of yourself doing the job and ask yourself the following questions:

What you are wearing?
Where are you - in a training room, or delivering this remotely?
Are you working on your own? Or what are the people whom you are working with like? Are they the same age as you or older/younger?
What equipment are you using - a laptop, visualise aids or other tools?
What are you doing?
How are you talking to your clients?
How do you know how your clients are feeling about the session? How do you feel - excited, interested, apprehensive, bored?
How are you interacting with your colleagues?
What will you do if the session feels like it's not going well?
Are you working close to where you live or working from home?
What are you planning for later - a night in in front of the TV, catching up with friends or will you need to work late?
How are you feeling at the end of the working day?

Think very carefully afterwards about the picture you have built up. If you felt negative about the whole experience, try to pinpoint the source of the negativity; is it just nerves about starting the job, or is there a characteristic of the work that worries you?

Talk this over with someone you know, or request a careers consultation to speak to a careers practitioner who can help you think objectively about these anxieties.
Use your six thinking hats

Are you stuck in a rut with a career decision? Maybe you’re torn between two job offers, or just starting out and trying to decide which sector you’d rather work in. Whatever your dilemma, the ‘Six Thinking Hats’ is a tool that can help you get a more rounded view of your situation.

The Six Thinking Hats concept is a decision-making tool developed by psychologist Edward De Bono. It asks you to consider a problem from various perspectives, by adopting different thinking styles - represented by each of the six hats. This approach encourages you to reflect on factors which would usually fall outside of your typical thinking style, so it can be a much more comprehensive way of looking at a problem or decision.

Let’s look at each hat:

**White Hat** Facts & Information - Gather the relevant factual information
**Red Hat** Emotions & Feelings - What do I feel? How might others feel about this?
**Green Hat** Creativity & Possibilities - What other ideas can I generate? What haven’t I considered?
**Yellow Hat** Benefits & Positives - What are the benefits of this? What is the value to me?
**Black Hat** Cautions & Risks - What could go wrong? What are the potential problems?
**Blue Hat** Manage the Process – Have I thought about all the perspectives and have I reached a decision?

So, by wearing each hat and considering the above, you are able to break a decision down and look at it from all angles. This can help you to focus or redirect your thoughts, and ultimately reach a more measured conclusion.
Use your BRAIN

The acronym BRAIN provides an easy-to-remember framework that you can use to assess a decision's opportunities, threats and challenges systematically. The tool was originally designed to help medical professionals and their patients to make decisions quickly, but it can be applied to lots of different areas of decision-making, including those about your career. It encourages you to use both logic and your intuition and can be particularly useful if you are trying to push a decision through and with limited time.

To apply the BRAIN framework to a decision you're trying to solve, answer the questions within the acronym below.

Benefits – What are the benefits for the chosen course of action?
Risks – What are the risks involved for you?
Alternatives – Are there any other approaches that you could consider?
Intuition – What is your gut feeling about the situation? Is this course of action really the one that you want to take?
Next (or Need time or Nothing?) (action planning) - Do you need to take more time to evaluate the problem? What happens if you do nothing? Would doing nothing actually pose less risk than taking action?
Frequently asked questions on career decisions

I've got limited time to make a decision – what do I do?

Sometimes time is against us and you might be faced with a decision to make quickly, for example a last-minute job offer, two job offers that come at the same time, a course offer, or a module deadline. Firstly, don’t panic and do try some of the decision-making models above. Sometimes we need to decide with only the information that we have available at the time and going with your gut instinct might be what is the right decision at that moment.

What if I make the wrong decision?

Remember you don’t have to stick to your initial decision forever and there are always other options. Just like your decisions, your career too will change so if the first option isn’t right for you, you can always change direction and learn from the process, accepting that it may just take a little longer to get where you want to be.

Learning to reframe your thoughts can help you identify opportunities for growth and learning rather than feeling stuck in the current situation and uncertain about a new direction.

How do I choose my next module if I don’t have a specific career goal in mind?

If you are studying for career reasons but feel unsure about your ultimate goal then careers related research is a must to help you understand the paths and routes to a range of careers. Some job roles do require a specific qualification but for most graduate level roles the degree subject is less important. An academic qualification or a degree can open up doors to many careers, but it is advised to think about what roles are right for you and if they complement your skillset, experience and personality. You can also research how to enter a range of professions and see what you may need, whether that’s specific skills, further work experience, accreditation or courses.

What help is available if I’m still feeling unsure or needing further advice?

You can request a careers consultation and one of our consultants can talk to you about your decision-making approach and the factors that impact the decision that is unique to you.