

EXERCISE 10.2: CAREER RESEARCH PROJECT

The career exploration project is designed to help you learn more about a career you are interested in. This information will be helpful in choosing your major and the courses you need to take to reach your goals. This project is about researching a major that may lead you to the career you desire, and will assist you in developing your academic plan.

Please review the following guidelines:

Format: 5 typed pages (minimum), double spaced, font: Times New Roman (size 12), (should NOT be handwritten), works cited page, MLA format

Introduction

Introduction/Description of Career. In this section, state your major and the specific degree you plan to obtain; describe what you want to do in your career after finishing your education; and what your salary expectations are for this particular field. Be specific.

Research of College/University

Overview of Selected School or Schools. In this section, describe the college(s) you are attending and/or plan to attend that offers the major you have chosen for the topic of this paper. Include demographic information, location, facts about the campus, and describe a minimum of 5 aspects or characteristics about the college(s) that interest you (college catalog or college website). [1 paragraph]

Course of Study. In this section, identify the prerequisites you must take prior to entering the program. Also include the minimum GPA requirement for acceptance into the program and whether it is an open or selective admission program. Attach a copy of the curriculum guide for your major to your paper (include a sentence that states: *Please see attached curriculum guide for program of study*). [1 paragraph]

Educational Expenses. In this section, answer the following: What will be the total cost of your degree? What is your plan for paying for your education? How long do you think it will take to achieve your educational goal? How closely does this match the target date listed on your timeline? [1 paragraph]

Attach a copy of the timeline showing the dates you would like to have your educational and personal goals obtained (i.e., When would you graduate? When would you start and graduate from graduate school? When would you start a family? When would you retire?)

Career Research

Career Research/Job Outlook. Using various campus resources (Library, Career Center), and Internet sources (such as the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* website: <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>), research the following:

- *Expected availability of jobs in your career* (1 paragraph)
- From research you have done, discuss the occupational outlook for your chosen career. Give actual statistics, number of new jobs, etc. Also, discuss why this particular career field is growing or shrinking.
- *Nature of work/working conditions* (1 paragraph)

(Continued)

- Discuss the day-to-day job tasks of your chosen career. Also, discuss things like work environment, hours, travel involved, etc.
- **Training/education** (1 paragraph)
- Discuss what kinds of training/education would be required beyond college (once you are working in your career choice). Discuss things like certifications, training, licenses, etc. that may be required. Remember, technology and innovation is constantly changing. We are life-long learners. Training does not stop once you graduate.
- **Earnings/salary** (1 paragraph)
- From research you have done, discuss the expected salary for your chosen career. Consider discussing ways that you could earn more money and compare salary ranges for similar careers or various areas of the country.
- **Other information you found interesting** (1 paragraph)
- From your research you should have obtained lots of information about your career. Use this paragraph to discuss additional information not already explained in the above sections. You could discuss likes/dislikes about the career, related occupations, additional opportunities for advancement, etc.

Research of Individual in Your Field

Make an appointment with someone in your chosen field and interview this person by phone or in person. Include contact information (name, job title, address, telephone, e-mail address). First, start with relatives, friends, and co-workers, or referrals from people you know. If you feel comfortable, identify people in positions of interest in your community and formally contact them for an Informational Interview. If you are contacting strangers, you might begin by introducing yourself as a college student doing research on (your career of interest). Most people are willing to talk about what they do; just be sure to respect their time and busy schedule. Therefore, always have your questions prepared in advance (see below) and arrive on time. Once you begin the interview, record the responses for processing later.

Tips for Conducting Information Interviews

- Thank the person for taking the time to speak with you. This should be the first thing you do after meeting the person—before you officially begin the interview.
- **Prepare your interview questions in advance.** Here are some questions that you might consider asking:
 1. During a typical day's work, what do you spend most of your time doing?
 2. What do you like most about your career?
 3. What are the most difficult or frustrating aspects of your career?
 4. What personal skills or qualities do you see as being critical for success in your career?
 5. How did you decide on your career?
 6. What personal qualifications or prior experiences enabled you to enter your career?
 7. How does someone find out about openings in your field?
 8. What steps did you take to find your current position?
 9. What advice would you give first-year students about what they might do at this stage of their college experience to help prepare them to enter your career?
 10. How does someone advance in your career?
 11. Are there any moral issues or ethical challenges that tend to arise in your career?
 12. Are members of diverse groups likely to be found in your career? (This is an especially important question to ask if you're a member of an ethnic, racial, or gender group that is underrepresented in the career field.)

13. What impact does your career have on your home life or personal life outside of work?
14. If you had to do it all over again, would you choose the same career?
15. Would you recommend that I speak with anyone else to obtain additional information or a different perspective on this career field? (If the answer is "Yes," you may follow up by asking, "May I mention that you referred me?") It's always a good idea to obtain more than one person's perspective before making an important choice, especially one that can have a major influence on your life, such as your career choice.

Feel free to add new questions to this sample list.

- **Take notes during the interview.** This not only benefits you by helping you remember what was said, but also sends a positive message to the persons you interview because it shows them that their ideas are important and worth writing down.

Final Note: If the interview goes well, you might ask whether you could observe or shadow your interviewee during a day at work.

Interview Summary

What did you learn that might help you in planning for your career? In a summary paragraph, discuss your interview. Identify who you interviewed and discuss what you learned from your interview that might help you in planning for your career. (Include your interview questions/answers with your paper.)

Self-Assessment Questions

After completing your interview, take a moment to reflect on it and answer the following questions:

1. What information did you receive that impressed you about this career?
2. What information did you receive that distressed (or depressed) you about this career?
3. What was the most useful thing you learned from conducting this interview?
4. Knowing what you know now, would you still be interested in pursuing this career? (If yes, why) (If no, why not)

Summary

Summary. In this section, summarize what you learned about your field. Explain how your choice of career and major matches you (your values, interests, abilities, personality, learning style and multiple intelligences). Discuss the impact this paper had on your choice of major/career, including any thoughts about changing your major/career. (1 paragraph)