

2026 EDITION

Career Direction Workbook

Make realistic decisions using your circumstances, evidence, finances and small experiments.

This guide is free. No email, no paywall, no promised outcome. Use it, test it, adapt it to your circumstances, and do the work.

How to use this guide

Read one section, complete the action, collect evidence, and only then move forward. AI may help you research, organise, critique and practise. It should not invent your experience, make your decisions, or replace your judgment.

Remember: guidance improves decisions; persistence and execution create results.

1. Start from your real circumstances

A useful career plan respects your responsibilities, finances, location, health, timing and current evidence. Ambition without constraints is fantasy; constraints without experimentation become fear.

Current position

List education, skills, work evidence, languages, network, savings, dependants and legal or geographic constraints.

Minimum stability

Calculate essential monthly costs, available runway and the income level below which a plan becomes unsafe.

Non-negotiables

Identify responsibilities you will not ignore and trade-offs you are genuinely willing to make.

Privilege and support

Name the resources you have - time, money, family support, access, citizenship or mentors - and use them responsibly.

Action: Write a one-page factual situation statement without judging yourself.

AI support prompt

Ask me neutral questions to map my career circumstances. Separate facts, assumptions, preferences and constraints.

2. Find direction through evidence

You do not need to discover one perfect passion. Look for the intersection of energy, ability, opportunity and sustainable conditions.

Energy

Which problems or activities hold your attention even when they are difficult?

Ability

What have you learned faster or performed reliably? What evidence do other people recognise?

Opportunity

Which problems are organisations or communities investing in, and what entry routes exist?

Conditions

What environment, schedule, income and location allow you to remain healthy and responsible?

Action: Choose three possible directions and collect real evidence for and against each.

AI support prompt

Create an evidence table for these options. Do not rank them until I provide constraints, examples and market observations.

3. Run small career experiments

A reversible experiment is safer and more informative than a dramatic decision based on imagination.

Work sample

Complete a small realistic task and ask someone in the field to critique it.

Conversation

Speak with practitioners at different levels about daily work, entry routes and difficult parts.

Short course

Use a focused module to test interest and learning ability, not to collect another certificate.

Shadow or volunteer

Where appropriate, observe the environment or contribute to a bounded real problem.

Action: Design a two-week experiment for each shortlisted direction with a clear learning question.

AI support prompt

Help me design the smallest ethical experiment that would test whether this field fits me. Include evidence to collect and a stop condition.

4. Skills, gaps and sequencing

Do not study everything. Build the smallest credible combination of core knowledge, practical evidence and communication needed for the next opportunity.

Role requirements

Analyse recurring requirements across real opportunities, not one dream vacancy.

Gap types

Separate knowledge gaps, practice gaps, evidence gaps, network gaps and eligibility constraints.

Sequence

Learn foundations, produce a work sample, obtain feedback, improve, then increase difficulty.

Proof

Create artefacts you can explain: analyses, designs, code, research, process documents, presentations or outcomes.

Action: Select one primary gap for the next four weeks and define what proof of improvement looks like.

AI support prompt

Classify my gaps into knowledge, practice, evidence, network and eligibility. Ask for examples before recommending courses.

5. Country, study and relocation decisions

A country or university is not a guarantee of employment or settlement. Evaluate the complete scenario and downside.

Total cost

Include tuition, living costs, insurance, visa fees, travel, lost income and emergency reserves.

Eligibility and rules

Use official current immigration, professional and university sources. Rules can change.

Career relevance

Assess curriculum, teaching quality, work exposure, employer links and outcomes - not only rankings.

Downside plan

Decide what happens if work, sponsorship, health or finances do not go as expected.

Action: Build best-case, realistic and difficult-case budgets before committing money.

AI support prompt

Create a decision checklist from the official facts I provide. Flag missing evidence and do not predict visas, sponsorship or employment.

6. Decide without demanding certainty

Good decisions are made with incomplete information. The aim is a reasonable, reversible next step with controlled downside.

Define criteria

Choose five to seven criteria and weight them before comparing options.

Separate fear from risk

Fear is a feeling; risk is a possible event with likelihood and impact. Both deserve attention, but they require different responses.

Set a review date

Commit for a defined period, collect evidence and review without moving the goalposts every day.

Preserve options

Avoid unnecessary debt, maintain relationships and continue developing transferable skills.

Action: Make one next-step decision and schedule a review based on evidence, not mood.

AI support prompt

Challenge this decision memo. Identify assumptions, irreversible costs, missing alternatives and evidence that would change the choice.

My current situation, responsibilities and financial runway:
Three directions I am testing and why:
Evidence already supporting each direction:
Small experiments I will complete in the next 30 days:
Decision criteria and the date I will review them:

7. The next 90 days

A practical plan balances stability, exploration, skill-building and visible output.

Days 1-30

Map circumstances, shortlist directions and run small experiments.

Days 31-60

Choose a primary direction, close one important gap and create a credible work sample.

Days 61-90

Obtain feedback, improve the evidence, start focused outreach and review the decision.

Every week

Protect essential responsibilities, record evidence and make one useful connection.

Action: Track actions completed, evidence produced and lessons learned - not only motivation.

AI support prompt

Run a weekly review with me. Ask what I completed, what evidence changed, what I avoided and the next smallest useful action.