



 TOOLKIT RESOURCES

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How to develop a career plan in research



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Thinking about a career in research? Here's some tips to help you on your way.

1 | Identify what you are passionate about

It's hard to get into research without knowing what research areas intrigue you. You're not expected to know right away. Most likely, you are still discovering and developing your interests, and that's okay. To figure out what your interests are, reflect on these questions:

- What questions/problems am I most interested in exploring and/or solving?
- What (if any) research topics relate to my hobbies, personal interests, or extracurricular activities?
- What research topics relate to the career field or sector I want to end up in? What interests me in that field of work?

For example, you may feel concerned about climate change and want to explore different solutions to enhance environmental sustainability. You may feel drawn towards a public health issue, such as COVID-19, and want to get into health research. Research drives everything we do, from policy decisions to design practices, so there are many options to explore where you could research the things you're passionate about.

2 | Think about your pathways

Education is one of the key pathways for you to explore your interests, develop your skills and experiences, and connect with peers, lecturers and researchers who work in your area of interest. Your study, at school and university, can be a place where you can kick off developing your research skills, through critical thinking, working with data, reading academic papers, preparing presentations, and report writing. If you are at university and want to be more engaged with research, consider doing your Honours year, as it can provide you with more research experience, training opportunities, and networks. You can also do your PhD or Masters to get more exposure in research. However, you definitely do not need to continue studying to become a researcher. There are many different pathways to research, like being a part of youth research bodies like the **WH&Y Commission**, or through training programmes like **Explore**.

3 | Make connections

Begin to develop networks of people that could connect you with research work. Find out who the key people in your field are and who they work with. This can be academics, researchers, lecturers, teachers, careers advisors, other students, and youth or research organisations. You can connect to these people on social media sites such as LinkedIn or Twitter, and keep an eye out for networking events, webinars and workshops relevant to your research area of interest. See if your university, school or favorite organisation has a research department that you're interested in. When making connections, take initiatives to build your research skills and experiences. Express your interest by emailing researchers at your university, at research centres or non-for-profit organisations, to volunteer and build your work experience.

4 | Know potential roles

With research skills and experiences, be aware of all the relevant job opportunities, including outside of academia. Some of these roles can be user experience (UX) researchers, design researchers, evaluation officers, project coordinators, market researchers, consultants and specialists.