



UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA

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Career Exploration Strategies and Job Search Tips

Ana Sabo, Career Advisor
Mykhaylo Bodnar, Career Advisor

Career Centre



What is a career exactly?



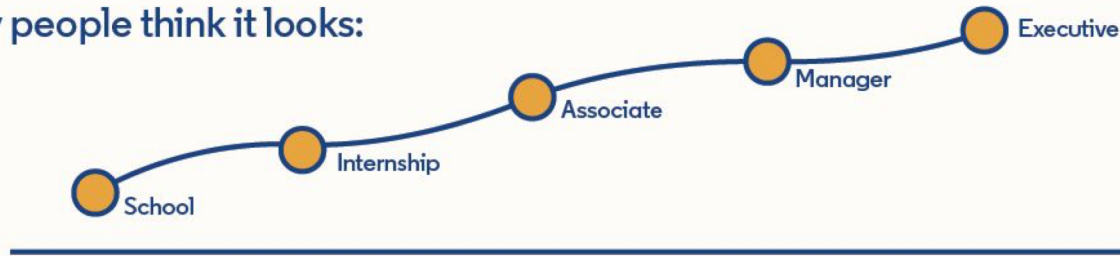
Career

The term career refers to the sum of your work (paid or unpaid), learning (formal & informal) and leisure activities throughout your life. In other words, career is the sum of all experiences.



Careers are non-linear

The way people think it looks:



How it can also look:



An aerial photograph of a narrow, paved road that winds through a dense, lush green forest. The road curves from the top left towards the bottom left of the frame, disappearing into the trees. The foliage is thick and vibrant green, with some sunlight filtering through the canopy.

Action + Reflection

Our approach to career development encourages

Take Action: explore, build skills, connect – even without knowing the outcome.

Reflect: learn from experience to guide next steps.



A Next Steps Approach

“Like the weather, we might be able to predict what’s going to happen tomorrow, or the day after, but as the time horizon moves out on to weeks, months or years...it becomes almost next to impossible to make predictions.”

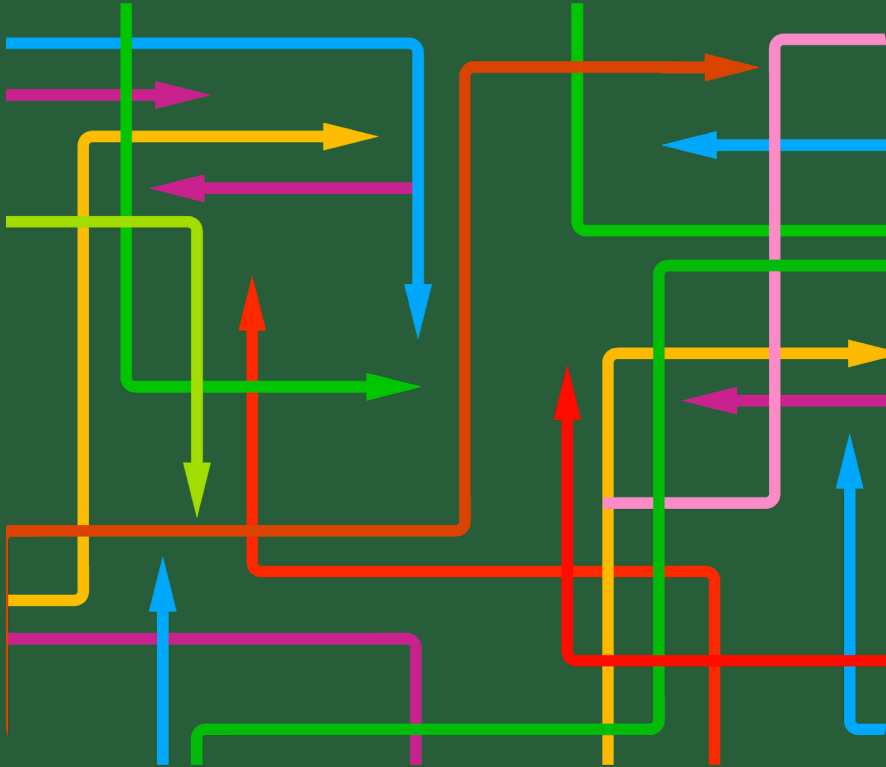
– Jim Bright

Next steps

- ❑ What aspects of your graduate studies do you find most engaging or fulfilling?
- ❑ Did your research experience lead you to discover any new interests?
- ❑ What skills did you develop or enhance through your research experience?



Keep multiple options open



Explore Diverse Paths

Maintaining versatility in your career strategy allows for greater resilience and more opportunities.

- Continually explore possibilities
- Develop transferable skill sets
- Network across various sectors
- Stay curious about emerging roles

Tell your story in different ways



Adapt Your Narrative

Develop and revise your career story based on changing circumstances and personal reflection

- Embrace your story as your story even if it is still developing
- Reflect on career stories of others
- Tailor your documents for specific roles

Build and maintain relationships



Cultivate Your Network

Authentic connections open doors to mentorship, collaboration, and hidden opportunities.

- Seek formal and informal mentors
- Engage with professional associations
- Offer value to others in your network
- Maintain consistent follow-ups

Take risks



Embrace the Unknown

Calculated risks lead to innovation and career breakthroughs.

- Seek uncomfortable opportunities
- Learn from unexpected failures
- Challenge the status quo
- Invest in your own curiosity

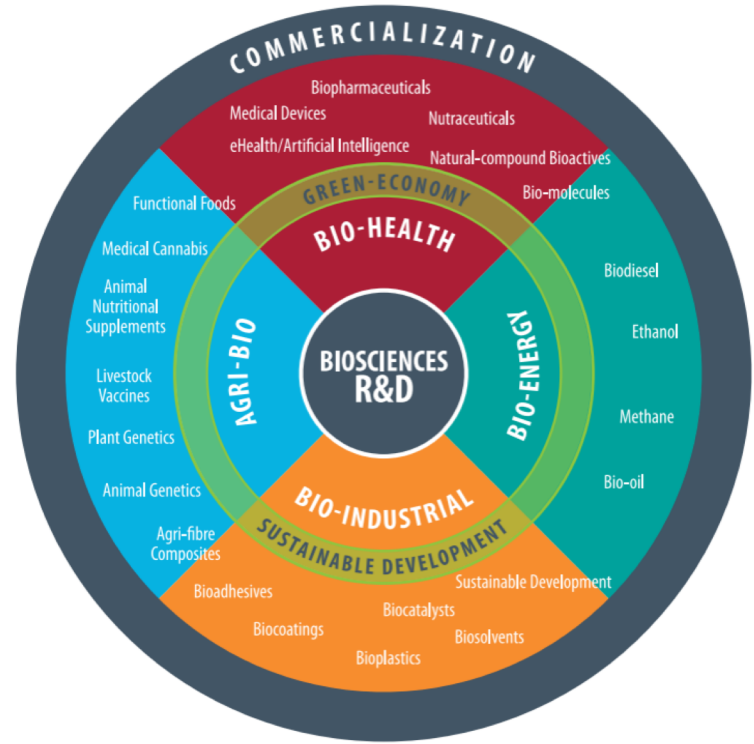
Reflection Questions

- Consider what success looks like to you
- Examine what your past experiences have told you about your values
- Revisit and revise your vision of success as it evolves
- What have I done recently to step out of my comfort zone?
- How can I combine my skill sets to create unique opportunities?
- What skill gaps do I have? Where can I develop these?

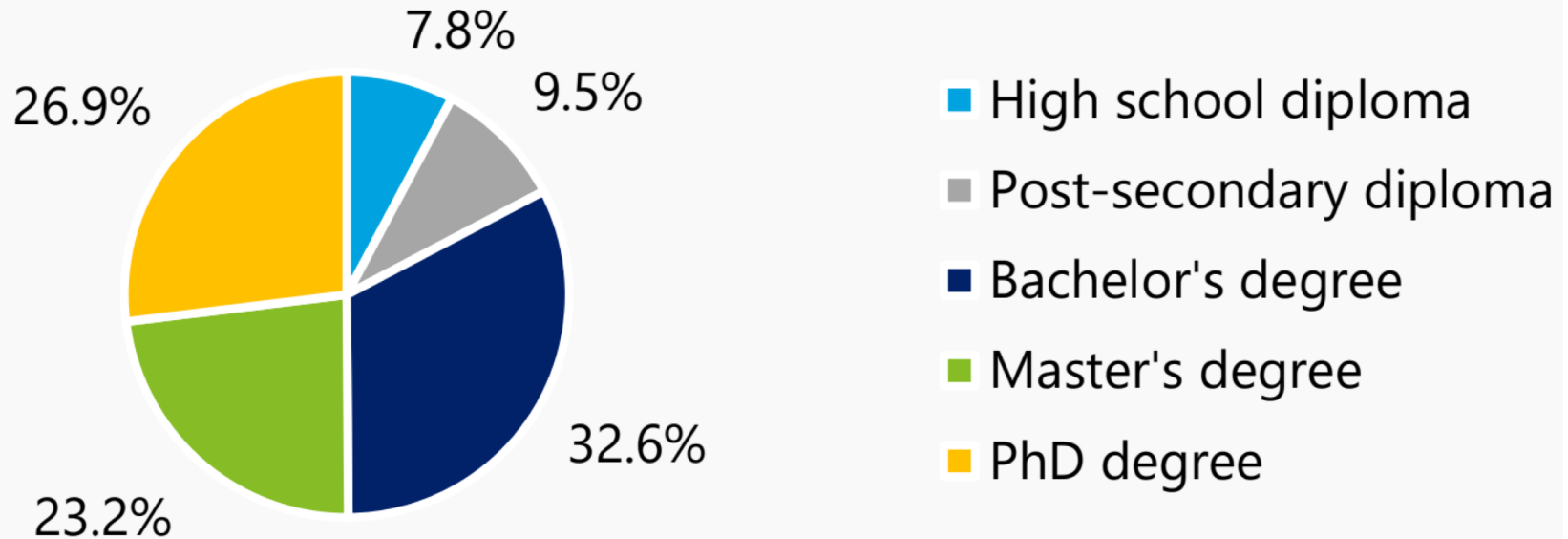
The Bioeconomy

What is it?

“The bio-economy is defined as the economic activity associated with the invention, development, production and use of primarily bio-based products, bio-based production processes and/or biotechnology-based intellectual property.”

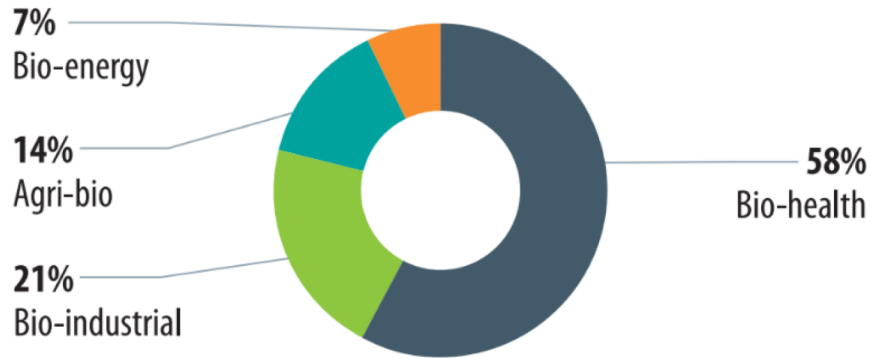


Level of education of bioeconomy employees

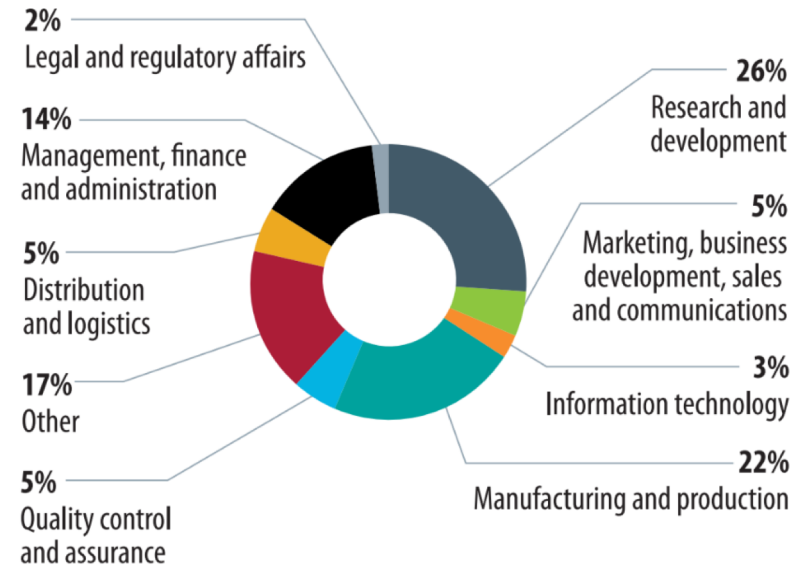


Jobs in the bioeconomy

Most work in bio-health



Job functions cover a wide range



How can I learn more about a specific job?

Telling your story in different ways: Transferable skills in resumes and networking

Transferable skills

Communicating your value in industry requires shifting focus from *what* you did to *how* those skills apply to a new context. Transferable skills are the bridge between academia and your future career.

What are transferable skills?

Key Characteristics

- **Portable:** Competencies applicable across diverse industries and roles.
- **Distinct:** Separate from discipline-specific technical or "hard" knowledge.
- **Embedded:** Often developed naturally through routine academic and research tasks.

Examples

psychology Analytical reasoning

assignment Project management

forum Stakeholder communication

groups Leadership and mentorship

data_usage Data synthesis

insights Strategic thinking

Deconstructing Academic Experiences

Academic task	Transferable skill	Employer-relevant language
Conducting research	Problem definition, data analysis	Strategic analysis, evidence-based decision-making
Teaching	Communication, facilitation	Training and stakeholder engagement
Publishing	Writing, synthesis	Executive-level written communication
Grant writing	Persuasion, budgeting	Business development, resource allocation
Supervising students	Leadership, coaching	Team management, performance evaluation/development
Lab work	Standardizing procedures, attention to detail	Standard operating procedure (SOP) execution, documentation integrity

Misalignment often occurs in language, not capability!

How to Identify Your Transferable Skills

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What problem was I solving?

Employers think in terms of problems and solutions. Frame your experience as a solution to a specific challenge.

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What constraints did I face?

Constraints are where competence shows up. Detail how you navigated limited time, budget, or resources.

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Who were the stakeholders?

Industry work is relational and cross-functional. Identify who you collaborated with and who benefited.

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What outcomes did I produce?

Employers evaluate contribution through outcomes. Use numbers and metrics to demonstrate tangible value.

Articulating your value through transferable skills – research and policy

Academic activity

Studied the impact of after-school physical activity programs on youth engagement and well-being.

What problem was I solving?

- Local recreation programs reported declining youth participation. There was a need to systematically evaluate engagement levels and identify factors influencing sustained participation.

Who were the stakeholders?

- Municipal recreation department, program coordinators, youth participants and families, faculty, funding bodies.

What constraints did I face and how did I manage them?

- Limited budget (used low-cost survey tools), inconsistent attendance (standardized tracking methods), time constraint of 12 weeks (streamlined data collection), and ethical requirements (secured parental consent).

What measurable outcomes did I produce?

- Collected and analyzed participation and survey data from 75 youth participants, identified three key predictors of sustained engagement (peer connection, activity variety, and facilitator interaction), delivered recommendations adopted by program coordinators, and presented findings in a research symposium.

WHO reframe

WHO Reframe	
What did I do?	Evaluated youth engagement in a municipal after-school recreation program serving 75 participants across 3 program sites.
How did I do it?	Designed and administered surveys, analyzed attendance trends over a 12-week period, standardized tracking processes, and presented findings to 5 recreation staff and municipal supervisors.
What was the outcome?	Identified 3 key drivers of sustained participation, informed program adjustments adopted across sites, and presented the findings at a research conference.

Survey design

Data analysis

Evidence-based
reporting

Cross-functional collaboration

Program
evaluation

Applied research

WHO reframe – how do we use it in our resumes?

Evaluated a 12-week municipal recreation program serving 75 youth across 3 sites, analyzing survey and attendance data to identify 3 key engagement drivers and inform program improvements adopted across sites.



Research Coordination

Coordinated data collection and evaluation for a 12-week municipal recreation study (75 participants across 3 sites), developing survey instruments, standardizing tracking protocols, analyzing engagement data, and reporting findings to municipal leadership and at a research conference.

Study coordination

Data collection
oversight

Reporting

Compliance

WHO reframe – how do we use it in our resumes?

Evaluated a 12-week municipal recreation program serving 75 youth across 3 sites, analyzing survey and attendance data to identify 3 key engagement drivers and inform program improvements adopted across sites.



Policy Analysis

Conducted evaluation of a 12-week municipal recreation program (75 participants, 3 sites), analyzing survey and attendance data to identify key engagement drivers and develop evidence-based recommendations presented to municipal leadership and at a research conference.

Program evaluation

Public-sector
reporting

Program evaluation

Stakeholder briefing

Networking: Building Relationships

The Mindset Shift

Networking is not collecting business cards or asking for favours.

Networking is relationships built on genuine shared interests and mutual value.

Quality over quantity. One meaningful connection beats 100 superficial ones.

Key Ingredient #1: Common Ground

- Start by thinking about what it is that you bring that is useful to others, especially in terms of your professional interests
- Identify people doing work you love or want to do
- Talk shop with them; discuss industry challenges, trends, ideas
- Your goal: conversation, not leads

Example: “I’m interested in renewable energy. Can I ask you about your work in that space?”

Key Ingredient #2: Mutual Value

- Sustain relationships by offering genuine engagement
- Ask honest, sincere questions about their work
- Share helpful information or insights when you can
- Be genuinely interested. People can sense when you're faking it

Networking isn't transactional. It's about respect and showing you value your connections as people, not just as networking contacts you can benefit from.

Key Ingredient #3: Time

- Good networking takes time
- Trust grows through repeated positive experiences
- Once trust is established, people draw you into their circle

Hidden job market truth: 70-80% of hires happen through networks before positions are posted publicly

Where to Network

Online Platforms

- LinkedIn
- Webinars through professional associations

In-Person

- Student clubs and associations
- Industry conferences
- Alumni networks

Bio-economy Resources



<https://www.biotalent.ca/>

Job Board: The PetriDish

Biocareer pathways

Bio-economy career profiles

Training programs



<https://bioalberta.com/>

Member directory by category

Events

Work Integrated Learning



<https://lifesciencesbc.ca/>

Job Board

Member directory

Events

TYPES OF ADVISING APPOINTMENTS

We offer four types of advising appointments:

Career Advising

LinkedIn Profile Critique

Mock Interview

Document Reviews: Resume, CV, Cover Letters

Career Mentoring Program

Job Shadow Program

Connect with professionals to learn from their career stories.

Career Centre



DROP-IN ADVISING

Talk to a career advisor in person at 2-100 SUB. Drop-in advisors can answer quick questions, recommend resources, or help you identify the next steps in your career management.

- Wednesday, May 27, 1 – 3:30 (Humanities Centre 1-08)
- Tuesday, June 2, 1 – 3:30
- Wednesday, June 17, 1 – 3:30
- Tuesday, June 30, 1 – 3:30
- Wednesday, July 15, 1 – 3:30

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