



Career Planning for Foundation Doctors Workbook

Session 3: Arriving at Your Decision

July 2019

Introduction

This workbook has been designed specifically with the career planning needs of this particular group and is one of a series of learning materials being produced for a range of healthcare professions, produced by the Careers Team for Health Education England - London and South East (LaSE).

Career Planning Model

The Career Planning e-module introduces the trainee to the tried and tested **SCAN** model enabling them to follow a systematic process for making and actioning their career decision. This model follows four consecutive stages which form a cycle of career planning.



SCAN Model for Career Planning

There is a section of the workbook to represent each of the following stages of the SCAN model and each section of the workbook should be used in tandem with the relevant section of the e-module.

Self-Awareness- What type of clinician do I want to be? This includes a thorough examination of your individual values, priorities, interests, personal

qualities, skills, preferred style, potential stressors, and how they relate to your work as a clinician.

Career Exploration – What options are available to me? This includes an introduction to approaches to gaining insights into the variety and number of options open to you at different stages of your clinical career.

Arriving at a Decision – Which is the best choice for me? This includes an introduction to a range of decision making strategies and a reflection on your experiences of making decisions in the past. You can choose from a range of exercises to help you consider your options in the light of what you learned through self-assessment and career exploration.

Next Steps – When and What do I have to do to achieve my career goal? Once you have completed the three previous stages you may be ready to take the next steps towards achieving your goal. You will be introduced to a method of developing a SMART action plan as well as advice and links to a range of resources – to help optimise your success at achieving the next step in your career.

This is a cyclical process which it is recommended to follow every time you reach a career transition. At each stage you may find that your priorities change and your skills have changed or advanced so it is always advisable to work through all four stages every time you have a career decision to be made. The assumption is made in this workbook that you will have worked through the previous stages first and for this reason links between the sections will be referred to.

Stage 3: Arriving at your Decision

This stage will introduce you to information covering a range of decision making styles and suggested tools that you can use to help you consider your own decisions. This stage will demonstrate how the tools can be used using a worked examples to illustrate this. By the end of this stage you should have a series of personal reflections about your own decision making so far, and the process you have used for this particular decision and a checklist for you to check how robust your decision is.

The assumption is made that you have worked through the previous stages:

- **Self-awareness**
- **Career Exploration**

You should understand therefore what is important to you in your career and what the options are which you have open to you.

Making Career decisions

What strategies do you use to make career decisions?

You will have read in this section that there is evidence to suggest that the way you have made successful decisions in the past can be a good indicator of strategies you could use to make career decisions in the future.

A good way to help you reflect on your decision making pattern is to draw a **Lifeline** of your career pathway and associated decisions, think about the strategies you used and how successful these had been on the outcome.

Follow the instructions below to draw your own Lifeline:

- Take a large sheet of paper and lay it 'landscape' on the table
- Draw a line from left to right about half way down the paper
- On the left hand side mark above the line with + and below the line with -
- Starting on the left hand side put the date or your age when you made a decision that was significant to how your career has developed. (for some people this could be early on such as a spell in hospital, a family member who is a doctor; or much later on such as a positive experience during an elective in a particular specialty during your degree)
- Put the decision you made next to the age either above or below the line depending on how positively or negatively you felt about the impact that decision has had on you. The distance from the line represents the level of feeling.
- At the right hand side of the page mark today's date on the line.
- Now go back and from the time you chose as your start date mark along the line the ages when significant events happened in your life.
- Either below or above the line - depending on whether these were positive or negative experiences - name these events. Now join up the dots.

Consider your decision making strategies for a couple of significant events writing your reflections in the spaces below:

In your reflections you might wish to consider: What factors had influenced your choice and the type of research and analysis you undertook to help you arrive at your decision. Indicate the decision making styles you used to arrive at each decision.

Event	Positive outcome	Negative outcome	Reflections
<p>Example: Age 26: successfully applied to follow paediatrics specialty for ST1</p>	yes		<p>In reaching this decision I had undertaken a taster placement, had spoken about the longer term career with a junior consultant had read about the work of a paediatric consultant. My aunt, a paediatric consultant persuaded me that this was a good decision. I did a paediatric rotation after I had applied and this confirmed for me that this was the right decision as it just 'felt right'.</p>

What have you learnt about your most successful decision making strategies that you can now apply to the decision you now have to make?

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Making YOUR decision

Weighing up your options

By this stage you will have gathered a lot of information about: **yourself** - such as your values, interests, skills, priorities – and so on; as well as information about the options that you are considering – such as specialty opportunities, length of training, location of training, standard work pattern, level of competition, longer term career prospects and so on. You will have also considered what your preferred decision making strategy. If you feel that you are ready to draw all this information together to make a decision, then the next few exercises are worth looking at more closely.

You should also have looked at the section on the e-module entitled '**How do you move from your Lifeline to making your career decisions?**' and should have an understanding of the following processes for helping you reach a decision. These are all rational, systematic approaches to the task and some may work better for you than others. Take a look at each, refer back to the e-module if necessary, and choose those that you think will help you address the career issue you have.

SWOT analysis

This exercise may work well for you if you like to review your strengths and how they relate to the opportunities that are under consideration. This exercise enables you to consider where any gaps and blocks to success might be. Using this can help you prepare for how potential difficulties might be managed as you progress through your career.

What is the career question you wish to resolve?

Use the table on the next page to help you think about your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the context of finding an answer to your career question.

STRENGTHS • • •	WEAKNESSES • • •
OPPORTUNITIES • • •	THREATS • • •

- Has this way of weighing up the options helped you reach a firm conclusion?

- What else do you need to think about in order to be confident of your decision?

PROS & CONS

This exercise helps focus on the positive aspects of the issue you need to decide upon. Conversely it encourages you to think about the possible negative aspects of your intended choice. Having completed the table, you need to consider to what extent the positive aspects outweigh the negative aspects of the option you are considering.

What is the career question you wish to resolve?

PROS	CONS
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•

- Has this way of weighing up the options helped you reach a firm conclusion?
- What else do you need to think about in order to be confident of your decision?

Decision-making matrix

This is a very systematic process of narrowing down options whereby a score is assigned to the value you place on the different criteria that are important to you. When you have completed the table, add up the totals under each of your options.

1. Insert the options you are considering (up to 3)
2. In the left hand column list the 8 most important factors: values/Work preferences/skills and or interests you want to take into account when decision making
3. Create a column titles 'importance' and rate how important the factor you're considering is to rate your decision on a scale of 1-5, with 1=not very important and 5=critical
4. Create another column titled 'probability' and rate the likelihood that each option will fulfil each factor on a scale of 1-5, with 1=very little chance and 5=no doubt it will
5. Multiply the **Importance** number by the **Probability** number and enter the result in the Subtotal boxes add the subtotals for each option and write the totals in the spaces at the bottom.
6. Finally, compare the totals and look at the highest one. How do you feel about this being your highest score? If your favoured choice does not have the highest ratings, do you need to adjust your ratings or think again about what is important to you? You may wish to discuss your results with a colleague or career coach if the scores are not what you expect.

Factors	Option	Option 1		Option 2	
	Importance	Probability	Subtotal	Probability	Subtotal
TOTALS					

- How has this way of weighing up the options helped you narrow down your options?
- What, in your opinion, do the factors attracting the highest scores tell you about the suitability of choosing either option?
- What do these figures **NOT** tell you about the suitability of choosing either option?

Checking how robust your decision is

You have now systematically analysed your options, taking on board the factors that are important to you. What conclusions have you come to about your next career decision? How confident are you about this decision? Perhaps the next exercise will clarify this for you.

How robust is your career decision – introducing the ROADS model

Use the checklist below to highlight any further work you need to undertake in order to confirm this decision. If any of the boxes are not ticked take time to consider what you will commit to doing to give you greater confidence of your decision.

The decision I have made is:

Question	✓
How REALISTIC are you about your decision making?	
I have fully researched the specialties open to me at this stage in my training	
I have spoken to a range of people in the specialties I am considering	
I have obtained advice and feedback from others on my suitability	
I have identified what I might find difficult about this decision	
I understand the balance of influence on this decision between my 'head' and my 'heart'	
Have you given serious consideration to all the OPPORTUNITIES available?	
I have thoroughly investigated alternative options	
I have considered the reasons why I have rejected certain specialties and am seriously considering others	
I can name the specialties that I have never ever considered and understand the reasons why	
Have you considered the ANCHORS that provide support in your life	
I have fully considered why I originally selected medicine as a career	
I have considered how my priorities may change over time	
I have made a list of the pros and cons of the specialties I am considering	
I am aware of the compromises I have made and how this has impacted on my choices	
Will the decision adequately DEVELOP your potential?	
I have investigated how the nature of this speciality changes as I will progress within it	
I have considered how I can sustain my interest once I have mastered the skills in this speciality	
Have you considered how you can minimise the potential STRESSORS which may impact you as a result of choosing this speciality?	
I have considered the downside of my chosen speciality	
I have considered particular causes of stress that I would find particularly difficult (eg workload, deadlines, responsibility, tragedy, boredom, conflict, competition change, performance)	
I have looked at the numbers leaving this speciality and explored the reasons why they do so	
I have considered how bad the disadvantages of this speciality would have to get before they outweighed the benefits	

Reflection:

You have now considered the research and analysis that you have undertaken to reach the decision you have made. Look more closely at the ROADS checklist and reflect upon the following questions.

What gaps if any are there in your checklist?

To what extent are you concerned about these gaps?

Use the following table to list the gaps you have identified and what steps you need to take to give you the confidence of your decision.

GAP	Action needed	When by
Example: I understand the balance of influence between my 'head' and my 'heart' and am happy with this	To arrange an appointment with a careers adviser to explore further the link between my systematic approach to decision making and how I 'feel' about what it is telling me	30 October
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

You have now reached the end of the decision making Stage.

Further Support

If you feel that you would like to discuss your results and reflections from the Career Planning stages with a careers adviser please contact your local Postgraduate Medical Education Centre for details of what individual support is available in your region (**NOTE:** Clients within HEE London and South East can follow the link <http://www.lpmde.ac.uk/professional-development/careers-unit/what-we-do/contact-us>)

For Foundation Doctors in London and South East the following additional support services are available through the LaSE professional Support Service

- **Individual Careers Support** – to help you explore the factors impacting on your career choices and career planning
- **Specialist Clinical Communication and Linguistic Services** – helps support effective communication with patients, careers and colleagues
- **Individual Support Team** – confidential educational support service for clinicians with performance concerns
- **Coaching Service** - helps trainees in challenging situations that could prevent them from getting the most from their careers.

All services are confidential, work independently from your employer and are by self-referral only and can be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.lpmde.ac.uk/professional-development/professional-support-unit>