CHOOSING A COURSE OF STUDY

If you are a school leaver considering your options, the 21st century world of work is very different from when your parents started work. Rapid changes in technology and the need for employees to have a variety of skills means that anyone who just studies a course will be ill-equipped for the world of work. Yes, qualifications are important as they provide a framework for you, but you will need to add experience and growth through a range of activities and interests.

This ongoing process, which we call career development, is unique to you. See this process as a set of steps, and move away from the idea that career choice is a once-off decision taken in matric. Life after school will expose you to so much that will challenge and change you and often presents options you were not aware of at school. Once you recognise that choosing a course of study is not the same as choosing a career, it frees up your choices.

What confuses the issue is that some qualifications are connected to certain fields of work (e.g. Chartered Accounting), while others seem to have no connection. While all qualifications have a body of knowledge, this does not mean that the career options open to those studying in these fields are limited to this subject area. The fact is ALL work requires skills and in most cases skills are not unique to particular types of work.

Grade 11’s and 12’s often express fears about “choosing the wrong career”. This is greatly lessened if you understand you are not choosing a career for life in matric. If you do have a specific career in mind, research it well, as many people have inaccurate and romanticised ideas about what certain jobs entail. But if you haven’t a clue what you’re going to be, don’t stress.

Choose a study area that you are interested in and good at. Whether you are sure about what you want to do career-wise or not, it is essential to research the content of a course you are considering.

If researching your study choices seems too overwhelming for you in matric, don’t panic. This is normal, even healthy. This is not the time to narrow your horizons. If in doubt, specialise later rather than sooner. Remember, career development is a life-long process – give yours the time and attention you deserve.