Getting A Head Start

‘Getting a head start’ incorporates four challenges designed to get students thinking about their futures. Each challenge can form the basis of group discussions, research topics, or reflections. They also work really well as short, targeted discussions, or three-minute papers.

CHALLENGE 1

Engage in as many activities during higher education as possible, including both activities relating to your study discipline, and activities that just sound fun and rewarding.

Why? This makes you better equipped for a diverse range of career types and enables you to develop new skills and confidence, and discover and try new possibilities.

How? Pursue diverse activities outside, or in parallel with, your specialism.

When? Right now! Find out what is available inside and outside of your school, community, and professional networks. Look online and offline. Find out whether your institution offers course credit for community/service activities.

CHALLENGE 2

Challenge your aims and plans.

Why? You probably have a Plan A right now, so what is your Plan B? Have you thought about what you really want your career to look like? Even writing down some of the things you’re certain of can help you turn down or rethink opportunities that don’t fit with your aspirations. These decisions can prompt you to reconsider what you actually want from your career.

How? Give yourself space to think through and talk over what is important to you. Enlist the support of significant people such as friends and family, teachers, mentors, lecturers, and peers.

When? Right now! Ask yourself what you want from your career every time you make a decision or undertake one of these challenges.
CHALLENGE 3
Take ownership of your learning.

Why? You need not scrap your dreams if you feel that they are becoming unachievable. You do, though, need to know what your goals are and how you plan to achieve them.

How? Identify what you need to do to achieve your aims. Seek out opportunities to do this, or, if existing opportunities are not there, create your own.

When? Right now! If you know what you want from your learning, you are much more likely to achieve it.

CHALLENGE 4
Work out what ‘career’ success means to you. This challenge includes mention of subjective and objective careers. You can find more information about this in ‘Conceptualising Careers’.

Why? Success is so often assumed to be one thing or the other, but knowing what it is for you will help you make key career decisions.

How? Consider again the objective and subjective elements of your career and how these match up for you: what is most important to you in your career?

When? Right now! Remember, however you define success you will still need to be diverse, flexible, and open-minded in order to respond to your career as it changes over time.