



APhA

Career Pathways
Program

Follow-up Materials



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8th Edition



Overview

The APhA Career Pathways Program workshop has introduced you to an effective decision-making process and provided you with information and techniques to assist you in implementing the process. The real value, however, is in your own follow-through.

Additional sets of materials, such as the “tools for assessing yourself,” are included in this follow-up document to provide you the opportunity to re-evaluate your initial thoughts. As you continue to research career information and talk with others, your rating of some critical factors may change, presenting you with even greater insight into career options that better fit you. Periodically rework these exercises to help reinforce your career plan or utilize the results to explore new directions and opportunities.

All of the exercises can be done on your own; some, such as the **Decision Balance Sheet** exercise, will be more effective when done with a counselor or friend. The **Guide to the Numerical Scales** on the following page relates these follow-up activities to the stages of the decision-making process.

As mentioned in the **Briefing Document**, rating and weighting the critical factors also can be done online at www.pharmacist.com/Career/Career-Pathways.

Finally, here are some additional suggested activities that will serve to supplement the APhA Career Pathways Program.

1. Observe a pharmacist in each of your areas of interest for a day. If you can observe multiple settings, that would be even more helpful for a broader experience.
2. Review your profile exercises with a practicing pharmacist in each of the areas you are considering (obtain names through your alumni association, faculty, or state/national association).
3. Attend a local or regional meeting of the associations or organizations that represent your selected specialties.
4. Contact professional associations for additional information on the areas in which you are interested.
5. Read professional journals or visit websites to keep abreast of current issues in different practice areas.
6. Volunteer your time for 4 hours every month in a variety of pharmacy settings, observe the practitioners at work. In 6 months, you can observe six approaches to the profession in just 24 hours.
7. Explore postgraduate training in areas of interest.

Guide to Numerical Scales

Several exercises in the APhA Career Pathways Program require you to use numerical ratings and calculations, which can be confusing because three different numerical scales are used.

The following scales are used in the exercises:

Rating scale	Terminology	Exercise
A) 0 to 10	Rating	Critical factors (Briefing Document)
B) 0 to 5	Weighting	Critical factors (Briefing Document)
C) -5 to +5 (-5 = least appropriate fit and +5 = most appropriate fit)	Value	Decision Balance Sheet (Workshop Workbook and Follow-Up Materials)

Notes on the scales:

- A. The scale from 0 to 10 is on a continuum. Rate your personal preferences on each critical factor.
- B. The 0 to 5 scale is used to assign priority weighting to each critical factor.
- C. The -5 to +5 scale is used to place a value on each critical factor as it relates to a particular specialty in the **Decision Balance Sheet** exercise. You are providing a numerical “fit” for each factor: +5 means the factor “fits” you well and is of high value, while -5 means the factor provides little value or is a lower value “fit.”

These arbitrary scales are used to facilitate calculations. The calculated results of the exercises are designed to make preferences more visible and provide a comparison of options. They should never be interpreted as a final decision.

Note: If using the “Online Assessment Tool” to rate critical factors, as in **Exercise 5 in the Briefing Document**, calculations are automatically done for you based on your input.



Tools for assessing yourself

Rating and working the critical factors:

The following items describe important aspects of the work of pharmacy professionals. These “critical factors” provide insight into your career decision. Your rating of these critical factors will help you assess your goals, values, strengths, likes, and dislikes.

Instructions:

Highlight your rating on the continuum for each critical factor below, and/or visit www.pharmacist.com/career/career-pathways for the online assessment tool.

These critical factors have been developed to help you assess your own preferences; however, they do not imply or suggest any judgment about you or your choices. Each pharmacist and student pharmacist is unique. It is quite normal to like certain aspects of a particular pharmacy area, as well as to dislike other aspects.

The critical factor exercise is only one of the first steps in your self-assessment. To get the best results from this exercise, you should “work” the factors by asking yourself questions about each and trying to answer as many of these questions as you can.

By working on the critical factors, you will develop an in-depth personal profile that is crucial to your decision making. The following questions for each critical factor are provided to stimulate your thinking. You should add any additional questions you think are important.

Critical factors

1. Opportunities for advancement

To what degree do you want a position that allows for advancement?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Little advancement								Great opportunities for advancement		

Questions:

1. Do I want to work within a structure where I will be able to advance to more challenging and responsible positions?
 2. Is climbing a so-called “career ladder” important to me?
 3. How important is a graduate-level degree to my professional advancement?
-

2. Leadership development/professional involvement

To what extent do you want a position that allows for the development of leadership skills and professional involvement in the pharmacy profession?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Little development of leadership skills and professional involvement							Great opportunities for leadership skills/professional involvement			

Questions:

1. Do I want to work within a structure where I will be able to attend professional meetings and participate in pharmacy organizations?
 2. How important is participation in professional association's activities to me?
 3. Are there pharmacy leaders/mentors in particular practice settings where I wish to work?
 4. How important is professional involvement to me?
 5. How much recognition for my work in the pharmacy profession do I want?
 6. Do I want others' opinions to affect my career choice, or am I concerned only that they respect my work?
 7. Do I strive to hold elected or other office in my pharmacy organization(s)?
-

3. Community impact

To what degree do you want to have ongoing or long-term relationships with patients or clients?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Little impact							High level of impact			

Questions:

1. How much impact do I want to have on the community related to pharmacy services?
 2. What practice environments are most conducive to impacting the community through continuity of care?
-

4. Autonomy

To what extent do you want your work to allow for autonomy in decision making?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Little/low autonomy							High level of autonomy			

Questions:

1. How much control do I like to have over my work? What level of supervision do I prefer to have?
2. Do I prefer to work independently or as part of a team?
3. Do I prefer being given the intended outcome and left to implement the project, or do I need to be given steps to follow?
4. How well do I work under the following conditions?
 - Having time constraints, tight deadlines, and need to make rapid decisions.
 - Having continuous work overload and knowing my decisions impact patients' health.

5. Focus

To what extent do you want your work to allow you to be focused on the future versus a focus only on immediate tasks?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Immediate tasks only Tasks focused on the future

Questions:

1. Do I prefer to follow a routine or to have diversity in my work?
 2. Do I prefer similar work every day or to focus on immediate tasks versus a variety of tasks, activities, and experiences?
 3. How would I categorize past roles I have had in terms of repetitiveness versus forward thinking? How satisfying has each been?
 4. How will practice environments affect the diversity of my work?
 5. Do I prefer to complete one task at a time, or do I like to juggle projects?
 6. Am I able to do more than one task at a time and do the tasks well?
 7. Do I prefer being involved in planning activities/programs for the future, or do I prefer to deal with current issues?
 8. Do I like having time to think about ways to improve situations or create new opportunities.
-

6. Prestige

To what extent do you want your work to provide professional prestige?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Provides low prestige Provides high prestige

Questions:

1. How important is local prestige to me?
 2. How much recognition in the community do I need to feel satisfied?
 3. How important is professional prestige to me?
 4. How much recognition in the profession do I need to feel satisfied?
 5. Do I want to become well-known/respected within the profession?
 6. Does where I practice affect the level of prestige I will receive?
-



To what extent do you want your work to provide personal fulfillment through the creation of value and positive outcomes?

0 1
Little extent

1. Will additional training enhance my patient care skills or value to my chosen practice?
2. Will I be compensated for the additional value I provide?
3. How much time will it take to receive additional training, and am I willing to invest that time?
4. Do I prefer working directly with patients to help them monitor the outcomes of their therapy, or is that best left for someone else?

To what degree do you want your work to have ongoing or long-term relationships with patients?

0 1 2
No ongoing/long-term

1. How involved do I want to be with patients or customers over an extended period of time?
2. What aspects of dealing with patients or customers over the short- and long-term will be most satisfying to me?
3. What aspects of dealing with patients or customers over the short- and long-term will be least satisfying to me?

To what degree do you want ongoing or long-term relationships with coworkers or clients?

0 1 2
No ongoing/long-term

1. How much time do I want to spend interacting with coworkers and/or colleagues?
2. What type of interaction am I looking for?
3. Will interacting with colleagues help with other factors that are important to me?
4. Does having long-term client relationships provide greater personal reward?

10. Writing/conducting research

How often do you want to engage in writing and/or conducting research?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
None of my time All of my time

Questions:

1. How much time do I want to spend writing for work?
 2. What type of writing do I prefer (documentation of work, creating articles)?
 3. Is there a preference to write for professionals or patients?
 4. How important is it for me to generate new ideas or be on the cutting edge in the activities I undertake?
-

11. Generating new ideas

To what degree do you want your work to involve generating new ideas?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Little innovative thinking High degree of innovative thinking

Questions:

1. Was an interest in research one of the main attractions of pharmacy school for me?
 2. Do I want laboratory, computer, or patient care work to be my major focus?
 3. Am I more comfortable blazing new trails or following what has already been done?
 4. Do I enjoy being on the cutting edge of pharmacy practice?
 5. Am I someone who follows the general masses, or am I someone who likes to be involved in innovative activities?
 6. How important is the opportunity to generate new techniques, approaches, or strategies?
 7. Am I more comfortable following established ways of working or blazing new trails?
-

12. Supervision/management

To what extent do you want to spend your time organizing, managing, or supervising others and/or business operations?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
None of my time All of my time

Questions (others):

1. How attracted am I to the responsibilities of supervising others?
2. How involved do I want to be in the daily activities of scheduling staff and managing personnel (employee management)?
3. How much do I know about motivating and supervising others?

Questions (business):

1. How attracted am I to the risks and rewards of running my own business?
 2. How involved do I want to be in the daily activities of running a business (e.g., bookkeeping)?
 3. How much do I really know about running or starting a business of my own?
-

13. Patient interaction

How much time do you want to spend interacting with patients?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
None of my time All of my time

Questions:

1. How many hours a day do I want to spend with patients?
 2. What aspects of counseling patients are most appealing to me?
 3. What aspects of counseling patients are least appealing to me?
 4. What traits or characteristics best qualify me to work with patients?
 5. Are there topics about which I would not want to counsel patients?
 6. How will changes in the health care system affect the amount of time I spend with patients?
-

14. Public interaction

How much time do you want to spend interacting with the public?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
None of my time All of my time

Questions:

1. How many hours a day do I want to spend with members of the public?
2. What aspects of interacting with the public are most appealing to me?
3. What aspects of interacting with the public are least appealing to me?
4. What traits or characteristics best qualify me to work with the public?
5. Are there topics about which I would not want to provide to the public?
6. How will changes in the health care system affect the amount of time I spend with the public?

15. Collaboration

How often do you want to work or collaborate with other health professionals or educate other professionals in your work?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
None of my time All of my time

Questions:

1. How much daily contact do I want to have with physicians and other health care professionals?
2. What type of contact would I prefer to have with these professionals (e.g., email, in-person consulting, phone contact)?
3. What do I find appealing and unappealing about interacting with other health care professionals?
4. Do I prefer to assume a leadership role?
5. What aspects of collaborating/educating other professionals are most appealing to me?
6. What aspects of collaborating/educating other professionals are least appealing to me?
7. How much of my time do I want to devote to collaborating with other professionals or students?
8. How much time do I want to spend working with teams?
9. Do I prefer to lead or follow in a team situation?
10. Do I prefer to get individual credit or team-based credit?

16. Family/leisure time

How much free time do you want to have for leisure and family activities?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Little free time Plenty of free time for family and leisure activities

Questions:

1. How many hours a day, on average, do I prefer to work?
2. How important is free time to me? Do these free hours have to be regular and predictable?
3. Do I prefer to work a regular shift, or can I accept irregular hours?
4. How will different practice environments affect my schedule?
5. Can I cope with irregular and unpredictable hours, or do I prefer a structured schedule? How will my home life be affected by an irregular schedule?



To what degree do you want to impact the well-being of individuals?

To what degree do you want to impact the well-being of individuals?

0 1
Low degree

1. How important is it to me that I see direct benefits for patients in my work?
2. Have I found satisfaction in the past from working on projects where there was no direct impact on people's well-being?

1. How important is it to me that I see direct benefits for patients in my work?
2. Have I found satisfaction in the past from working on projects where there was no direct impact on people's well-being?

To what degree do you want to solve problems with tried-and-true alternatives versus untested alternatives in your work?

To what degree do you want to solve problems with tried-and-true alternatives versus untested alternatives in your work?

0	1
Tried-and-true	

1. Do I find satisfaction in working in areas that have proven solutions to problems?
2. Do I enjoy working in unexplored areas where I deal with problems with theoretical or untested solutions?
3. What kinds of intellectual challenges (e.g., problem solving, analyzing, deducing) do I prefer?

1. Do I find satisfaction in working in areas that have proven solutions to problems?
2. Do I enjoy working in unexplored areas where I deal with problems with theoretical or untested solutions?
3. What kinds of intellectual challenges (e.g., problem solving, analyzing, deducing) do I prefer?

How general or specialized is the expertise you require in your work?

How general or specialized is the expertise you require in your work?

0	1
Generalized	

1. Do I prefer to be a specialist or a generalist? That is, do I prefer to know a single area in depth or deal with a broader picture comprising several areas?
2. What specialty areas currently seem attractive to me?
3. Do I have an area of practice that I wish to specifically focus on (e.g., patient population, disease state)?

1. Do I prefer to be a specialist or a generalist? That is, do I prefer to know a single area in depth or deal with a broader picture comprising several areas?
2. What specialty areas currently seem attractive to me?
3. Do I have an area of practice that I wish to specifically focus on (e.g., patient population, disease state)?



To what degree do you want your work to be composed of activities and tasks that are highly repetitive versus highly variable?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Highly repetitive

Highly variable

1. What types of repetition do I like?
2. What types of repetition do I want to avoid?
3. How do I define repetition—is this a positive or negative factor in my work?

How much of your time do you want to spend applying scientific knowledge in your work?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

No application

High level of application
all of the time

1. How important is it for me to use my scientific knowledge continuously in my work?
2. Was an interest in science one of the main attractions of pharmacy school for me?
3. Do I want to work in an area that requires less scientific knowledge and more business or academic skills?

How much of your time do you want to spend applying clinical knowledge in your work?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

No application

High level of application
all of the time

1. How important is it for me to use my clinical knowledge continuously in my work?
2. Was an interest in medicine one of the main attractions of pharmacy school for me?
3. Do I want to work in an area that requires less clinical knowledge and more business or academic skills?

23. Parental leave

To what extent do you want your work setting to offer parental leave opportunities?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Limited opportunities Unlimited opportunities

Questions:

1. Do I anticipate requesting parental leave?
 2. How long would I like to have for parental leave?
 3. Does parental leave apply to both male and female employees?
-

24. Compensation

To what degree do you feel compensated for your responsibilities in your work?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not well compensated Well compensated

Questions:

1. How important is income to me? What level do I need to be comfortable? Does my spouse or significant other (if applicable) feel this income level is appropriate?
 2. Have I set a long-range plan for myself to achieve a certain income level? Is this level realistic for the career options I am considering?
 3. What factors might influence how much money I want to earn? Some aspects to consider are caring for parents or in-laws, school loans, buying a home, etc.
 4. How important is it for me to know what my weekly/monthly salary will be?
 5. How important is it for me to know what my future positions and earnings will be?
 6. How much financial risk will those close to me tolerate? How might this change in the future?
 7. How worried am I about competition from other pharmacists in my area of practice?
 8. How much do I need to know about what the state of my practice will be in 5 years? In 10 years?
-

25. Benefit package

How comprehensive should the employee benefit package offered in your work setting?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not comprehensive Very comprehensive

Questions:

1. How important is my benefit package to me? What level do I need to be comfortable?
2. Have I set a long-range plan for myself to achieve a certain retirement fund or other benefit-package level? Is this level realistic for the specialties I am considering?
3. What factors might influence the level of benefits I want? Some aspects to consider are caring for parents or in-laws, family time commitments, etc.

Other factors and questions to consider:**Job-sharing opportunities**

1. Is job-sharing a possibility that I would like to explore?
2. Do I understand how job-sharing impacts patient care?
3. Is there a need for job-sharing in any practice environment that interests me?

Geographic location

1. How important is the ability to practice anywhere in the country? Am I limited to a geographic location?
2. Are there geographic locations I prefer to work in? Prefer not to work?
3. Are there cost-of-living or other financial considerations limiting my geographic choices?

Self-worth

1. How much credit/recognition/feedback do I need to receive for my work to feel satisfied?
2. Do I have a high level of confidence in the quality of my work?
3. Do I consider myself an outgoing or a reserved individual?

Entrepreneurial opportunity

1. How comfortable am I with taking risks?
2. Do I prefer working for myself or being an employee?
3. Am I willing to put the time into running my own business?
4. Do I enjoy doing non-clinical work (e.g., bookkeeping, finances)?
5. Do I have a plan for how I would make my business stand out from the competition?

Tools for assessing yourself

Decision Balance Sheet

The Decision Balance Sheet exercise will help you evaluate the various career options you are considering in terms of the critical factors you identified and any other considerations important to you. This activity will be useful to you after you have narrowed down your options and done some research on those options.

Instructions:

1. Fill in the top of the **Decision Balance Sheet** with the career options you are considering.
2. For each career option you listed, enter the critical factors—both positive and negative—that you feel are important in making your choice. For example, if patient interaction is something you do NOT want in a career, you should list that factor as well as the positive factors on the balance sheet. When completing this exercise, refer to the critical factors identified in the workshop. In addition, please add any other considerations important to you.
3. Under the “value/comments” heading, write your thoughts as to how each career option will measure up against each factor. In other words, will it provide what you want or not? If you find that you are uncertain about a given item, make a note of the information you need to seek out. Where applicable, separate your own (self) needs and interests from those of family and spouse (others). By doing so, you will have a better sense of the scope and significance of your decision.
4. Assign a value to each comment. Decide first whether a given career option represents a plus or a minus with regard to what you are looking for. Then assign each factor a specific value from -5 (least appropriate fit) to +5 (most appropriate fit). Where you do not know enough to assign a value, enter a question mark.
5. As a final step, review all the career options you have charted on the **Decision Balance Sheet** and compare the relative values you have assigned. For example, if you have more pluses than minuses for a particular career option, it may be one you wish to consider seriously and explore further.
 - a. Look for conflicting comments or values. Be rigorous regarding what you do and don’t know about each area and make plans to fill the gaps in your knowledge.
 - b. If you have question marks, you may need to conduct more research.
6. When you have completed the **Decision Balance Sheet**, you may want to review it with a faculty member or a counselor so that you can validate your perceptions of the various career options.



Decision Balance Sheet

Critical factors (self/others)	Career option: _____	Career option: _____	Career option: _____
	*Value/comments	*Value/comments	*Value/comments
Other considerations (self/others)			

* -5 (least appropriate fit) to +5 (most appropriate fit)

Decision Balance Sheet (sample)

***Gender:** Female **Age:** 22

Marital status: Engaged to be married to Bill

Employment status: Part-time in community chain setting

Critical factors (self/others)	Career options		
	Independent Community	Health system	Pharmaceutical Industry
	Value/comments	Value/comments	Value/comments
Supervision/management	+5 I'd be responsible for managing the entire operation.	-2 Probably not much opportunity.	+2 Would depend on my position in the company.
Patient relationships	+4 Working with patients is what I like best in the role I have now.	+3 I'd be helping patients, (though indirectly) for the most part.	??/-2 I won't see how I'm helping any one individual; all my help will be indirect.
Applying scientific knowledge	??/-2 I hope so. Most of the time at work, I'm too busy filling prescriptions.	+3 I'll be a resource for everyone on the hospital staff.	+4 Others: Professor Lakes says research is my strong point and thinks I should make a career of it.
Family/leisure time	-4 Self: Very long hours. Others: Once we have kids, it will be especially tough.	+4/+2 Self: Friends say I'd probably have a lot of free time, but it may depend on the hospital. Others: When we have kids, I could work part-time.	+4 Self: Plenty of free time. Others: Lots of companies have on-site day care. I could continue to work full time if I want.
Impact on well-being	-4 Very demanding.	+3/?? Depends on hospital.	+4 Would probably have a predictable schedule.
Compensation	-1/+3 At the beginning, not as much as with a chain. But with my own place, I'll earn a lot more.	+3/?? Self: From what my friends say, the money is pretty good. Others: Is it enough for us to save?	+3 Self: I'll make a very good salary but not as much as on my own. Others: We'll have two good incomes.
Other considerations			
Job security (added from personal list)	-2 Self: Having my own store will be risky. Others: There will be a lot more pressure on Bill to have a secure job.	+3 Hospitals always need a pharmacist, so I'd never have to worry.	+5 Self: My position in a company will be clear and my job secure. Others: Some of the pressure will be off Bill.
Entrepreneurial (added from personal list)	+5 My own place.	-2 Follow protocols—may not be able to be an entrepreneur.	-4 Would be limited to the procedures provided by the company.

4. This example has been created for discussion purposes only.

Tools for evaluating professional experiences

Introduction

Your professional experiences offer valuable exposure to the day-to-day realities of certain career options. The information you gain during these experiences can help you make your career decisions.

The following exercises will help you gain the most from your professional experience. Using what you have learned in the workshop—particularly in relation to the critical factors—you will be able to evaluate and draw conclusions from your experiences. Later, when it is time for you to make your career decision, you can refer to the information recorded on these forms.

The evaluation form is divided into two sections, both of which should be completed for each clerkship you enter. The **Pre-Professional Experience Evaluation** should be completed prior to entering each experience. It will provide you with some personal goals during the experience. These forms can be used with any type of rotation or experiential experience that you encounter.

The **Post-Professional Experience Evaluation** should be completed after each experience. It will help you properly assess your experience and determine areas in which you will need further information before making a final decision.

The more time you invest in appropriately evaluating each experience, the more objective and insightful your assessment and your final decision will be.

Pre-Professional Experience Evaluation

1. Career option: _____
2. My top critical factors in terms of evaluating a career option (refer to the **Briefing Document**) are:
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
 - d) _____
 - e) _____
3. What do I know (or assume to be true) about this career option as it relates to each of these critical factors?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
 - d) _____
 - e) _____
4. What do I want to find out about each of these critical factors during the professional experience?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
 - d) _____
 - e) _____



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Post-Professional Experience Evaluation

1. Career Option: _____
2. My top critical factors in terms of evaluating a career option (refer to the **Briefing Document**) are:
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
 - d) _____
 - e) _____
3. What did I learn about each of these critical factors during this professional experience?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
 - d) _____
 - e) _____

Now compare your response to this question to your responses to questions 3 and 4 in the **Pre-Professional Experience Evaluation**:

- Note any differences between what you assumed to be true (question 3) before your professional experience and what you learned during the experience.
- Determine whether you received enough information to answer the questions you identified (question 4) before the experience.

4. What do I still need to find out about this career option with regard to each of these critical factors? Include thoughts on **how** and **where** you will get this information.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____

5. What did I learn about the future of this career option, given current issues related to current health care?

6. What else did I learn or experience during this professional experience?

7. Right now, I am interested in this career option: (place an X on the continuum)

