

Undergraduate Researchers: *Is a career in academia right for you?*

Through your undergraduate research involvement, you get to work with a community of people who share your academic interests and passions.

You may find yourself considering the idea of advanced studies and a career in academia – but is it a fit for you? Take advantage of your position as an undergraduate researcher to investigate this question further.

Below are some general characteristics of an academic career.

- Select (x) how you feel about each characteristic, with 1 = very unappealing and 5 = very appealing. At the end, total your ratings in each column.
- If you have more in the “very unappealing” and “somewhat unappealing” columns than in the “somewhat appealing” and “very appealing” columns, you may want to consider career options outside of the academic work environment.
- If academia does seem like a potential option for you, make sure you take initiative and get to know people in your department: talk with graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, attend seminars and lectures, join student groups and demonstrate interest and critical thinking to your professors during class time. This helps you become socialized into your discipline, and develop professional networks and relationships with potential supervisors.

Characteristics	Ratings				
	1 ☹️	2	3	4	5 😊
Nature of the work					
Preparing lectures, group discussions, laboratory experiments, and the like					
Delivering lectures, leading group discussions and laboratory experiments, and the like					
Conducting research in your field of specialization					
Writing up and publishing the results of your research					
Presenting the results of your research to colleagues					
Preparing, administering and grading examinations, assignments, papers and reports					
Supervising students’ research activities and other projects					
Additional service; for example, academic committees, student advising, administrative functions					
Working conditions	1 ☹️	2	3	4	5 😊
Workload – generally very demanding, can vary from year to year					
Hours of work – weekdays, evenings and weekends, as required to prepare teaching materials, teach, conduct research, etc					
Indoors, primarily					
Sedentary, primarily					
Skills and qualities	1 ☹️	2	3	4	5 😊
Commitment and passion for learning					
Desire to share knowledge					
Ability to analyze, interpret and understand vast quantities of information					

Ability to present complex, in-depth information to students					
Ability to work well under pressure and heavy work demands					
Ability to handle criticism					
Self-motivation					
Self-discipline					
Intellectual curiosity					
Ability to work well with others and independently					
Excellent communication skills (written and oral)					
Strong problem-solving abilities					
Challenges	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Need to stay current in your field of specialization - requires a great deal of reading, attending conferences, and the like					
Need to be innovative and contribute to your field of specialization					
Need to attract funding for research activities					
Pressure to publish					
Competition - obtaining a permanent position may require moving from institution to institution initially					
Other	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Standard career progression: lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, professor					
High pay, especially in senior university positions, relative to the rest of the labour force; no maximum for full professorships					
Prestige and respect					
Attractive benefits package					
Opportunities for sabbaticals to undertake research activities and present/publish findings					
Academic freedom – choose your own research projects and work at your own pace					
Total					