UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

My CareerSkills Toolkit
for Graduate Students

Expert
Leader
Innovator
Communicator
MY GRADSKILLS

ucalgary.ca/mygradskills

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Welcome
Graduate Students

This toolkit was designed to help you in your journey of personal and career discovery through to securing a position after you complete your graduate degree. We hope that the My CareerSkills Toolkit will help you become more self-aware, and to see how your graduate education opens the door to career options both within and outside of the academic environment.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies is here for you, as we continually work to develop a transformed approach to graduate education that emphasizes experiential learning, skills development, and cultivation of an innovation mindset. My GradSkills assists with this by being a centralized resource of professional development workshops, resources, and events that help with academic and career success.

Thank you to the many organizations, students, and faculty from the University of Calgary and surrounding campus community for their contributions, input, and support throughout the development of this toolkit. Special thanks to the UCLA Career Center[1] and Graduate Student Services Team at the University of California, Los Angeles for their Career Preparation Toolkit, which served as inspiration for this resource.

We wish you all the best on your journey!

Lisa Young, PhD
Vice Provost and Dean, Graduate Studies

Welcome to the My CareerSkills Toolkit
for Graduate Students

How To Use This Toolkit

Planning your career is an ongoing process that will continue throughout your lifetime. The **My CareerSkills Toolkit** has been designed to help students like you at the **Master's and PhD level** begin the process of navigating career decisions and successfully planning for your career. Whether you plan to stay in academia, or find a job in the broader workforce, this toolkit can be used as a career planning resource both during and after your graduate training. Throughout this toolkit you'll find **information about the career discovery process and professional development opportunities and tools to help you achieve your career goals.** This process has been divided into 4 stages, a model developed by Career Services:

Know Yourself
Develop a sense of career self-awareness through a personal assessment of your values, interests, skills, strengths, and personality.

Explore Options
Investigate career options and begin to develop an appreciation for the sorts of careers that might be a good fit for your interests and the skills you've developed as a graduate student.

Get Focused
Evaluate career options, tailor your job search, and plan a course of action to achieve your career goals.

Take Action
Step into the world of work and develop your skills to excel in interview situations and negotiate or accept job offers.

What You'll Learn

By working through this toolkit, you will develop the skills you need to learn about career options available to you, and to effectively plan for your career. These four stages can be completed **in any order and at any point in your academic training**. Whether you're just starting to think about career options or are already in the process of applying for jobs, you can enhance your career success by incorporating the tools and resources outlined in this guide.

Workshop and Events

Keep an eye out for events and workshops featured throughout this toolkit, all of which are available on campus for free and have been designed specifically for graduate students. Make sure to register for workshops in advance by visiting the webpage of the office hosting it.

Having problems finding a workshop? Email **mygradskills@ucalgary.ca.**

Competencies You'll Develop

The University of Calgary is committed to providing you with essential skills to succeed in your career.
Your academic experience is training you to be an expert in your field. Using this toolkit will help you to develop
your competency as a:

• **Leader:** Build confidence in your skills and your ability to guide and inspire others.

• **Innovator:** Discover new ways of doing things and become a change-maker.

• **Communicator:** Learn how to communicate more clearly, both in academic and non-academic sectors.

By developing these competencies you'll enter the workforce with the skills and resources that employers value most.
Here are just some of the skills you'll have gained after finishing this toolkit:

LEADER
Personal effectiveness
Networking
Career awareness
Career searching

INNOVATOR
Entrepreneurial thinking
Problem solving
Business skills

COMMUNICATOR
Writing
Speaking
Teaching
Sharing knowledge

As you work through this toolkit, you may want to keep track of other competencies you've developed that are
relevant to your career and professional development. Start a list of the skills you're developing so you can refer
to them when it comes time to apply for jobs:

Campus Career Development Resources
for Graduate Students

My GradSkills

ucalgary.ca/mygradskills
mygradskills@ucalgary.ca

The My GradSkills office is a one-stop shop that provides information about a range of valuable and free workshops, courses, and activities available both on and off campus designed to support your academic and career development.

These resources develop both your academic and professional skills and have been endorsed by The Faculty of Graduate Studies. All endorsed workshops are geared to graduate students and regulated through participant feedback. These workshops also offer clear learning objectives and are facilitated by qualified instructors.

Graduate Students' Association

gsa.ucalgary.ca
careers@gsa.ucalgary.ca

Through the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) you have access to workshops, mentorship, and an Employer Liaison who offers support to graduate students pursuing careers in industry. Services designed to help you achieve your career goals include:

• **Career exploration** using various tools

• **Information interviewing** workshops and mock interviews

• **Responding to job postings** workshops and support

• **Negotiating job offers** workshops and practice

The GSA also offers **volunteer experiences.** Get involved in the graduate student community and expand your resume by taking part in on campus initiatives and committees.

Career Services

ucalgary.ca/careers
csstdnt@ucalgary.ca

The Career Services office offers one-on-one appointments with either a career development specialist or PhD career specialist who can help with your career planning and job search. They also offer a variety of other career preparation and professional development services, including:

• **Career workshops** tailored to graduate students and their job search needs

• A **career development program** designed to develop skills needed to effectively plan a career and succeed in your job search

• **Career events** that provide opportunities for students and alumni to connect with employers

• **Job search resources** such as CareerLink that allow you to search available jobs

• A variety of other student services including **career appointments, resume and cover letter support,** as well as **formal assessments** of your career strengths, interests, and personality

Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

ucalgary.ca/taylorinstitute
taylorinstitute@ucalgary.ca

The Taylor Institute supports individuals pursuing careers in academia by providing graduate students with teaching development through workshops and special events in course design, lesson planning, teaching strategies, and more.

The Taylor Institute also hosts a Graduate Student Teaching Development program where students interested in post-secondary teaching can develop their teaching practice, with opportunities for discussion, practice, and reflection.

Featured Workshops

Assessing Your Transferable Skills Developed in Your Graduate Program

Hosted by: Careers Services and the Graduate Students' Association

This workshop will help you assess the skills you've developed through your graduate training and communicate these skills to potential employers. You'll also have the opportunity to identify any gaps you may have in the skills most sought after by industry professionals. Several of the exercises from this workshop have been included as part of this toolkit.

Discovering the Entrepreneur Within

Hosted by: Mitacs

Take part in this full-day workshop to learn what it takes for an entrepreneur to reach their goals. Find out about the current Canadian landscape of entrepreneurialism and take away key resources to start your own business. You'll also have the chance to put your ideas to the test by creating a team-based product or concept to present at the end of the workshop.

Helpful Resource

The Versatile PhD[2] is an online resource for graduate students to help you identify, prepare for, and succeed in careers outside academia. Your UCalgary account gives you free access to premium features including: career job listings, a directory of graduates across North America, and information about careers and real resumes.

Grad and PhD Career LIVEbrary

Hosted by: Career Services

Take part in a Career LIVEbrary event where you'll sign up for one-on-one informational interviews on campus with a variety of professionals with graduate degrees who are working in related industries. Not only will this help you with your interviewing skills, but it will also allow you to learn more about your career possibilities and network with professionals in your field. This can be a great place to start building connections for future informational interviews down the road.

Information Interviewing: A Strategic Tool for Job Searching

Hosted by: Graduate Students' Association

Learn how informational interviews allow you to identify the skills employers want in your field, what kind of career options are available, and how to build your professional network and tap into the hidden job market.

Interview Strategies for Non-Academic Careers

Hosted by: Career Services

Learn how to prepare for a non-academic interview and enhance your confidence by attending this workshop designed to help you effectively answer common interview questions and speak more confidently about your skills and accomplishments in a non-academic context.

Introduction to Job Search and Networking for Non-Academic Careers

Hosted by: Career Services

By attending this workshop you'll learn the fundamentals of doing a job search, including how to research careers and industries, and create an action plan. You will also learn how to prepare for, target, connect, and follow up with professionals online and in person.

LinkedIn Lab

Hosted by: Career Services

This hands-on lab teaches students how to create an effective LinkedIn profile and optimize your account by joining groups, researching companies, and connecting with others. Learn how this platform can be used both for job searching and networking.

Negotiating your Dream Job

Hosted by: Graduate Students' Association

Develop techniques and strategies that will put you in the driver's seat when it comes to compensation for your skills. Develop skills to effectively communicate and close negotiations on top by engaging in mock negotiations with your peers in a safe environment before bringing your skills to the workplace.

Networking Skills

Hosted by: Mitacs

This full-day workshop has been designed to help you build relationships through effective networking. Participate in actual networking exercises and learn how to build a network both online and in-person.

Responding to the Job Posting

Hosted by: Graduate Students' Association

This workshop is designed to teach you how to properly read a job posting, and structure your resume so that you can respond to it appropriately and increase your chances of getting an interview.

Resumes for Non-Academic Careers

Hosted by: Career Services

Learn how to write your resume to secure an interview for non-academic careers and learn more about recent trends in resume writing.

StrengthsQuest

Hosted by: Career Services, Leadership and Student Engagement

Take part in a StrengthsQuest workshop where you will complete a self-assessment of your talents to discover your greatest strengths. Learn how your strengths contribute to your personal brand and build on your talents in this interactive workshop.

Social Media and the Job Seeker: Tips and Strategies to Give You the Cutting Edge

Hosted by: Graduate Students' Association

This workshop has been designed to teach you the importance of being involved in social media, what recruiters are looking for, and how to ensure your best profile is being seen. Learn about a variety of social media platforms that businesses prefer to research in the recruiting process and how you can build a professional online profile that will benefit your job search.

Can't find a workshop on a topic you are interested in? Contact My GradSkills for help in finding out more!
mygradskills@ucalgary.ca

Career and Professional Development Timeline

Early

Career preparation starts early in your graduate training. Take the time in your **first year** to complete these career and professional development activities.

Know Yourself

☐ Explore your interests, values, and skills

☐ Identify the skills you need to develop to get the job you want (see pages 23 – 24)

☐ Attend the workshop **Assessing Your Transferable Skills Developed in Your Graduate Program** offered by the GSA and Career Services

☐ Make an appointment with a Career Development Specialist through Career Services to do a self-assessment of your strengths, interests, and/or personality

☐ Create an Individual Development Plan[3] (IDP) to outline your academic and professional goals

Explore Options

☐ Attend the workshop **Career Planning and Goal Setting** offered by Career Services

☐ Complete a career decision making matrix and create a job search action plan using MyIDP[10] or CAREERinsite[11]

Middle

When you're **done your courses** or **completed candidacy** you'll want to explore the following career and professional development opportunities.

Know Yourself

☐ Take on a leadership role relevant to your interests (e.g., seek out opportunities to be a student mentor on campus)

☐ Expand your skills and experience through campus clubs and organizations, departmental committees, and volunteer opportunities

☐ Explore entrepreneurial resources through Haskayne's Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation[4]

☐ Create an elevator pitch (see page 40) and participate in the Three Minute Thesis Competition[5] (3MT®)

☐ Start crafting an ePortfolio[6]

Explore Options

☐ Consider applying for a Transformative Talent Internship with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, or an Accelerate Research Internship through Mitacs

☐ Choose volunteer work, a research position, or teaching assistant opportunities to gain experiences relevant to your career goals

☐ Find job opportunities through CareerLink[12] and other online resources such as OCCinfo[13] and O*Net OnLine[14]

Near Completion

A year or two before you finish your degree prepare for the transition to the workforce by engaging in the following career and professional development tasks.

Know Yourself

☐ Take advantage of career development resources offered at professional organizations (i.e., training, services) and scholarly/professional conferences (i.e., workshops, networking events)

☐ Familiarize yourself with resources such as University Affairs[7], QuintCareers[8], and From PhD to Life[9], which provide career advice to students pursuing careers outside of academia

Explore Options

☐ Research starting salaries in your field and identify hiring trends for industries using resources such as PayScale.com

☐ Attend the workshop **Understanding Canadian Business Culture & Hiring Staff** offered by the GSA

☐ Use Glassdoor[15] to find out about the hiring process of companies you're interested in and learn about the experiences of successful applicants

☐ Attend the workshop **Responding to the Job Posting** offered by the GSA

Get Focused

- ☐ Meet and network with graduate students and faculty in your department and through campus events such as the **Networking 101, Industry Panels,** and the **Networking Gala** offered throughout the year by Career Services
- ☐ Attend the **Networking Skills** workshop and the **Introduction to Job Search and Networking for Non-Academic Careers** offered by Career Services
- ☐ Join Versatile PhD[16] to gain access to a directory of graduates working across North America

Take Action

- ☐ Update your CV and cover letter on a regular basis
- ☐ Use Versatile PhD[18] to review resumes and cover letters written by other graduates with jobs outside academia
- ☐ Attend the workshop **Resumes for Non-Academic Careers** offered by Career Services

Get Focused

- ☐ Attend conferences and professional development events in your field
- ☐ Take part in **Networking 201: Professional Networking Skills for Graduate Students** with Career Services
- ☐ Build your professional brand and expand your network by creating a LinkedIn profile and connecting with alumni
- ☐ Attend workshops including the **LinkedIn Lab** offered by Career Services and **Using Social Media to Gain Employment Opportunities** offered by the GSA
- ☐ Join professional associations in your field
- ☐ Create a UCalgary business card

Take Action

- ☐ Attend the workshop **Information Interviewing: A Strategic Tool for Job Searching** offered by the GSA
- ☐ Conduct informational interviews with professionals in industries or companies and through the **PhD Career LIVEbrary** events offered by Career Services
- ☐ Get feedback on your resume in person at Career Services between 11am and 1pm on Wednesdays or online using eResume Review

Get Focused

- ☐ Attend career and employer information sessions to connect with recruiters
- ☐ Take part in an Alumni Connect[17] event
- ☐ Inform network contacts that you're actively looking for a job and begin requesting letters of recommendation
- ☐ Connect with professional organization contacts to identify job opportunities

Take Action

- ☐ Make use of online websites, job boards, and job databases to apply for positions of interest (see pages 32 – 35)
- ☐ Find job ads that appeal to you and begin to tailor your resume/CV and cover letter to jobs that interest you
- ☐ Attend the workshop **Interview Strategies for Non-Academic Careers** offered by Career Services
- ☐ Meet with a Career Specialist or Employer Liaison to do a mock interview and practice your interpersonal skills
- ☐ Attend the workshop **Negotiating Your Dream Job** offered by the GSA

Notes

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The career development process
Know Yourself

In this chapter you will:

- Complete an in-depth analysis of your values, interests, skills, strengths, and personality

- Learn about career assessments designed to assist you in exploring yourself and your career goals

- Set goals for further developing areas that align with your career aspirations

A graduate degree doesn't always lead to professorship. In fact, according to the Conference Board of Canada, only **20% of PhD graduates found tenure-track jobs in academia last year[19].** Fortunately, being trained at the Master's or PhD level opens the door to career options both within and outside of the academic environment. Regardless of whether you plan to stay in academia or enter the broader workforce, it's important to start your job search with an **exploration of yourself.**

In this stage of the career development process, you'll develop greater self-awareness by doing a personal assessment of your **values, interests, skills, and strengths.** This will help you do a more targeted job search and explore careers that align with who you are as a person. Although this stage of career development serves as a foundation, it's a process that you'll have to continually reassess as your values, interests, skills, and strengths change over time.

Chapter Snapshot

Formal Assessments

Having a better idea of your personal strengths, interests, and attributes will help you build a stronger sense of not only yourself, but also your career direction. Career Services offers a variety of low-cost formal assessments to students. These tools can help you increase your self-awareness and make more informed career decisions.

StrengthsQuest identifies your unique strengths and talents to help you understand how you can leverage them in your career to be more productive and engaged in your work. Using this tool, you'll also develop a plan to discover and develop strengths in your academics, your career, and beyond.
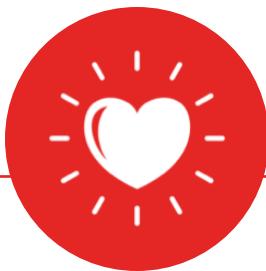
The **Strong Interest Inventory** is used to measure and describe your interests in a broad range of work environments. Gaining a better understanding of your preferences will help you identify potential career paths most likely to be a good fit for your unique interests.

The **Myers Briggs Type Indicator** describes your career and life preferences by matching them with your natural tendencies and preferences to identify possible career paths. When people are able to find work that suits their personality they tend to be more energized and motivated.

The Career Services' **Career Development Specialists** have been trained and certified in the administration of these assessments and will meet with you in person to review your results. To register for one of these assessments, or if you have questions, feel free to visit CareerLink[20] or the Career Services website[21]. For additional support, the **Leadership and Student Engagement Program** and the **Employer Liaison** with the Graduate Students' Association can also help with your assessments.

Helpful Resource

Visit **CAREERinsite[22]** through the Alberta Learning Information Services (ALIS) website and click on the "Know Yourself" section to complete self-assessment activities based on your preferred working conditions, values, interests, and career vision. This career planning resource also allows you to keep a personal record of your career planning activities and has helpful recommendations to explore and discover career options that suit you.

Values

Your core values are the principles that guide your life. When people live their lives according to their values, they are happier and healthier as a result. Having a better understanding of your work and life values will help you identify careers that you'll find both fulfilling and satisfying.

Values Checklist Exercise

Read through the list of values below and place them into one of the following three categories to indicate how important each value is to your work.

High Importance	Moderate Importance	Low Importance
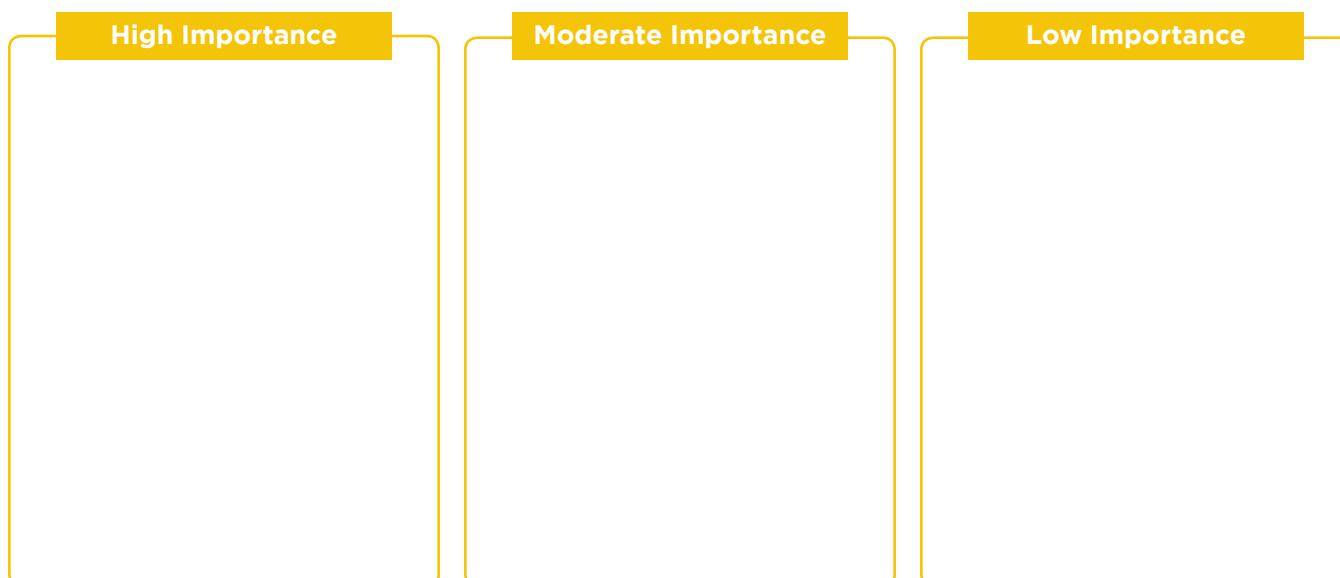
Work Values Inventory

Achievement	Happiness	Promotion
Advancement	Hard work	Recognition
Adventure	Health	Respect
Aesthetics	Helping others	Risk taking
Altruism	Independence	Satisfaction
Appreciation	Influence	Security
Balance	Innovation	Service
Belonging	Leadership	Status/Prestige
Challenge	Learning	Success
Competition	Location of work	Support
Creativity	Organization	Teamwork
Enjoyment	Outdoors	Tradition
Equality/Fairness	People contact	Variety
Family	Physical activity	Wealth
Flexibility	Power	Work environment
Friendship	Predictability	

Helpful Resource

Complete an online personal assessment such as the **Core Values Assessment**[23] or the **Life Values Inventory**[24] to clarify your values and develop strategies to make more effective career decisions.

Adapted from the Career Preparation Toolkit, UCLA

My top "must-have" work values are	
1.	2.
3.	4.

Give it a try!
work values exercise

Now that you've identified your top work values, take some time to reflect on how these values will affect your career choices.

Example Value: Family

How will this value affect my career choices?
I want a position where I don't have to travel or spend a lot of time away from my family; a job where my evenings are free and there is the possibility for flexible work options, such as working from home; and at least three weeks of holidays each year.

Example Value: Innovation

How will this value affect my career choices?
I want a position where I can be creative and make decisions that affect my work. I would like to work somewhere where I can make a real difference in both my workplace and the larger community.

Value:

How will this value affect my career choices?

Value:

How will this value affect my career choices?

Value:

How will this value affect my career choices?

Value:

How will this value affect my career choices?

Interests

You have now identified a number of values or beliefs that guide you in your career and life. Now it's time to look at your interests. These are activities you are drawn towards or curious about. While your values tend to stay the same, you may notice your interests change over time depending on things like your age and your experiences. In many ways, the things you value will shape what interests you, and vice versa.

You're already working towards a graduate degree in an area that interests you. What is it about your graduate program and research that appeals to you, and how could these same interests translate into potential career options? Knowing your interests will give you **direction** and **focus** in your job search. Building on interests you've developed as part of your graduate training can help you to find or create a job in a workplace that also highlights these same interests.

Give it a try!
career interest exercise

To discover potential career interests, begin by thinking about the kinds of things that you enjoy in general. The following questions will help you to come up with some ideas:

What do you love to do? What energizes you? What activities absorb your attention so much that you lose track of time?

What do you enjoy about these activities? Try to be as specific as you can.

Helpful Resource

To help you identify careers that might align with your interests, visit O*Net OnLine and check out their **Interest Profiler**[25], a resource that can help you find out what your interests are and how they relate to the world of work. Once you've identified what you like to do, the website will guide you to careers that match your interests and may be worth exploring further.

Our interests are a key part of what draws us to certain career options. If you're interested in something, you're more likely to invest **time, effort, and energy** into it. As with values, understanding your interests will give you the ability to better recognize areas of work that will be most satisfying for you.

Skills and Strengths

Your values, interests, skills, and strengths make up who you are as a person. Understanding and using this information can help you make better choices about your career. The last piece of understanding yourself is getting to know your skills and strengths. While your skills are things that you have learned to do over time, your strengths are those personal attributes that you naturally excel at doing, without having to be taught.

As a graduate student, you have developed and are continuing to develop many skills and strengths. Having a graduate degree means that you've already started to acquire key skills that employers want, such as **written and oral communication, problem solving, teamwork, leadership and innovation.** Together with your individual skills, these abilities can set you apart from others who are applying for the same position.

Understanding your skills will help you communicate to employers what you have to offer. It's important to be aware of and be able to articulate your unique skills to find a career where you'll be able to use your abilities to excel. By knowing your areas of greatest skill and strength, you can also better understand those areas you still need to develop. This active and continuous reflection is key to your career success and lifelong learning.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES
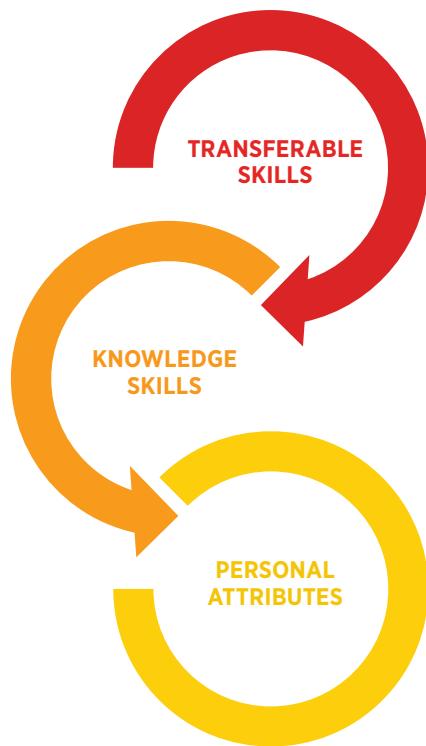
Transferable skills are adaptable skills you can apply to a number of roles. Having these skills ensures professional resilience, allowing you to be effective in a variety of careers and occupational positions.

Examples include:
Communication, leadership, decision-making and innovation.

Knowledge skills or technical skills are competencies you've developed specific to a particular job that you may use in another position.

Examples include:
Budgeting, data analysis and programming

Personal attributes are natural abilities or qualities that didn't have to be taught or that you learn quickly. These are referred to as your success skills and are attributes that allow you to be successful at work.

Examples include:
Focused, helpful and independent

Identifying Your Skills and Strengths

Strengths are things that energize you, you gravitate towards, and that may come naturally or easily. On the other hand, **skills** are competencies that you've had to learn and have developed over time with practice. To help you first identify your **strengths,** answer the following questions:

What do I excel at?

What things come naturally to me?

What am I most proud of about myself?

What are my biggest achievements?

Helpful Resource

What Color is Your Parachute? Is a best-selling book published by Richard Bolles designed to help you identify the skills you most enjoy using and the field you'll likely enjoy using them. This book provides individualized job search strategies and support for those seeking positions that best align with their personality, interests, values, and skills.

Strengths Self-Assessment

Most people tend to take their strengths for granted. This can make it difficult to identify abilities that could set you apart from other people or job candidates. Use this activity to help you identify the strengths you have.

Give it a try!
strengths 360 assessment

Start by identifying your own strengths or talents and then ask three to four friends, colleagues, or family members what they think your top five strengths are. Each person will give you a different list that will either affirm what you already know or point out qualities and strengths you may not have considered before.

	Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
Strength 1				
Strength 2				
Strength 3				
Strength 4				
Strength 5				

Workshop and Events

StrengthsQuest

Take part in a StrengthsQuest workshop hosted by Career Services and the Leadership and Student Engagement Office, where you will complete a self-assessment of your talents to discover your greatest strengths. Learn how your strengths contribute to your personal brand and build on your talents in this interactive workshop.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Understanding your skills and strengths is important, but it's also important to think about whether they align with your interests. Even if you have the skills for a certain job, if you're not interested in it you probably won't pursue it, and vice versa. This exercise will help you identify the kinds of tasks worth building a career around based on your interests and your skills.

Give it a try!
career on a napkin exercise

Think about your graduate and undergraduate education, volunteer roles, previous jobs, sports teams, and so on. Make a list of all the tasks that you've done in these roles below. Then plot each task in the appropriate quadrant in the diagram on the next page. Tasks that you like will indicate an **interest** and tasks you do well will indicate a **strength.**

Role	Activities or act performed
Teaching Assistant	Gave presentations, marked assignments, mentored students

Like

Tasks that you enjoy but aren't particularly skilled at are areas for growth. These are tasks that you may want to seek further training and practice.

Tasks that you both like and do well are likely to bring you satisfaction. These tasks can provide focus for your career choices, as you'll want to consider options where you do these types of tasks.

Don't do well

Do Well

Tasks that you neither like nor do well should probably be avoided.

Tasks you dislike but are good at can be a source of frustration and dissatisfaction. It is easy to get stuck doing this work, but if it doesn't provide enjoyment, it likely won't be fulfilling.

Don't like

Adapted from Graduate Guides, University of British Columbia

Transferable skills

For most graduate students, the problem of finding work isn't a lack of skills, but rather a lack of knowledge about how to communicate your skills. As a graduate student, you're accustomed to talking about what you know, but employers want to know what you can do. In other words, they are interested in your transferable skills, experiences, and knowledge.

> " You are not a PhD – you are an individual who earned a PhD. Rather than try to figure out how you can work for your degree, think about how your degree can work for you.

– Richard Wiggers (2015), Associate Dean, School of Liberal Studies at Mohawk College

Answer the Question:
"What does this mean for my business?"

Learning to talk about your value from the perspective of your audience is an important skill. When thinking about the skills you've developed as a graduate student, take the perspective of a potential employer and ask the question: **"what does this mean for my business?"** This will be the bridge that connects your abilities to the interests or needs of a potential employer.

Tips for Success

Top 10 Skills that Canadian Employers Want[26]:

1. Teamwork and Collaboration
2. Communication
3. Problem Solving
4. Functional Knowledge
5. Relationship/People Skills
6. Customer Service
7. Analytic Capabilities
8. Creative and Innovative Thinking
9. Industry Knowledge and Experience
10. Technological Literacy

You Have Transferable Skills!

Being a graduate student gives you the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills relevant not only within the academic environment, but also the broader labour market. These skills include:

- **Written and verbal communication:** Between writing a thesis, speaking at conferences and seminars, being a teaching assistant or mentor, and publishing journal articles, you have many experiences that show you can communicate effectively. When you leave graduate school, whether you have to write business reports, lead meetings, or have conversations with clients, these skills will come in handy.

- **Problem solving skills:** If you've been involved in research, then you've developed problem solving skills. As a graduate student, your research focuses on complex topics and problems. Often the purpose of your work is to provide a solution or improve the discipline. Your ability to come up with unique solutions or approaches to dealing with problems will be a valuable asset in the workplace.

- **Planning and organization:** A thesis is the perfect example of your ability to plan and execute a large-scale project. Not only do you have to plan ahead, but you also have to foresee potential risks, develop timelines, and maintain flexibility, all of which are important transferable skills.

- **Interpersonal and leadership skills:** Group projects don't always end after graduate school. Your ability to work as part of a team, contribute to group discussions, lead meetings, and motivate others to complete projects will serve you well in the workforce.

- **Creativity and innovation:** One of the main requirements of any graduate level research project is that it must be original. Your ability to be innovative and contribute to your field shows not only a creative talent, but also an ability to learn new concepts and teach them to others.

Give it a try!
identifying transferable skills

There are a number of activities you've completed as part of your graduate training that can be directly translated into transferable skills. Take a moment to reflect on some of the tasks you've done as a student and how these might help you in the workforce. Feel free to use the tasks you identified in the Career on a Napkin exercise on page 19 as a starting point.

Activity	Transferable Skills and Competencies Developed
Wrote a thesis	Ability to clearly organize and present large quantities of information
Completed graduate degree	Ability to plan and execute a multi-year project
Participated in the Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition	Ability to effectively communicate complex ideas to large audiences

Adapted from Career Services, University of Calgary

Workshop and Events

Assessing Your Transferable Skills Developed in Your Graduate Program

Career Services and the **Graduate Students' Association** have teamed up to help you not only assess the skills you've developed through your graduate training, but also how to communicate these to potential employers. You'll also have the opportunity to identify any gaps you may have in the skills most sought after by industry professionals. Several of the exercises from this workshop have been included as part of this toolkit.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Give it a try!
transferable skills story

You have more transferable skills than you think. To identify your skills, tell a friend, colleague, or family member one of the stories below about your experience as a graduate student. As you tell your story, have them check off the skills they hear you talk about.

Examples of stories to tell:

- What was involved in getting admitted to graduate studies at the University of Calgary
- A time in your graduate training when you were proud of a personal accomplishment
- An experience you had of overcoming a challenge in graduate school
- Your experience of completing a research report (e.g., your proposal)

Communication

- ☐ Listening actively
- ☐ Presenting effectively to groups
- ☐ Editing and proofreading documents
- ☐ Negotiating to reach agreement
- ☐ Expressing ideas verbally
- ☐ Writing at different levels
- ☐ Training or teaching new skills

Project Management

- ☐ Setting goals and achievable objectives
- ☐ Organizing information, projects, and resources
- ☐ Planning and developing projects or ideas
- ☐ Anticipating future needs or problems
- ☐ Scheduling and prioritizing tasks or events
- ☐ Monitoring progress or status of a project
- ☐ Evaluating information for improvements

Interpersonal and Teamwork

- ☐ Relating to diverse populations
- ☐ Understanding others/social perceptiveness
- ☐ Giving helpful and constructive feedback
- ☐ Mediating or resolving differences and conflicts
- ☐ Collaborating with others to achieve goals
- ☐ Building and maintaining relationships

Research, Analysis, and Problem Solving

- ☐ Recognizing or identifying problems
- ☐ Analyzing a problem by breaking it down into parts
- ☐ Researching the problem by gathering information
- ☐ Synthesizing information from different sources
- ☐ Interpreting underlying information from themes
- ☐ Testing and evaluating processes or solutions

Information and Data Management

- ☐ Attending to detail in data
- ☐ Maintaining records of information
- ☐ Using communication technologies
- ☐ Using productivity software
- ☐ Evaluating data quantitatively or qualitatively
- ☐ Estimating costs and budgeting

Leadership

- ☐ Chairing or facilitating meetings and discussions
- ☐ Motivating and inspiring others
- ☐ Persuading others to your point of view
- ☐ Delegating tasks and directing others
- ☐ Making decisions or recommendations
- ☐ Mentoring or coaching individuals

Personal

- ☐ Taking responsibility for actions
- ☐ Adapting to changing situations
- ☐ Learning new skills
- ☐ Self-motivation
- ☐ Positive attitude

Innovation

- ☐ Conceptualizing
- ☐ Creating new or original ideas
- ☐ Designing systems, processes, workshops, courses
- ☐ Predicting or forecasting events
- ☐ Improvising or adapting for other purposes

Transferable Skills Self-Assessment and Development Worksheet

After completing the previous activity, you'll probably notice some gaps in your skills that you'd like to fill. To help you work on these areas, create goals for yourself using the following worksheet. An example has been provided below with a blank sheet for you to fill out on the following page.

Start by selecting a specific skill or skill category that you'd like to develop and write it down. Rate your current level of competency in this area by circling the appropriate description and adding today's date. Then, rate your target level of competency in this area by circling the appropriate description and adding a date by which you hope to accomplish this goal. Finally, in the remaining space provided, add new experiences, along with the date, that show your growth in the category or skill area that you're hoping to develop.

Skill Area: Leadership (chairing, motivating, persuading, delegating, making decisions, mentoring)					
Current Competency Level Date: November 2016	Beginning	*(Developing)*	Adequate	Proficient	Accomplished
Current Competency Level Date: September 2017	Beginning	Developing	Adequate	*(Proficient)*	Accomplished

Where and how have you demonstrated growth in this skill area? Give enough detail so you are confident in where you developed the skill. Note what skills were shown.	
Description	**Date**
• Joined the Calgary Chamber of Commerce and ran for Secretary on the board of directors	January 2017
• Attended and facilitated my first meeting as Secretary on the Calgary Chamber of Commerce board of directors (skill: chairing or facilitating meetings and discussions)	April 2017
• Served on the policy committee for municipal directions (skill: making decisions or recommendations)	September 2017

Adapted from Career Services, University of Calgary

Give it a try!
transferable skills self-assessment

Follow the instructions on the previous page to select a skill or competency to develop and then create an action plan to make it happen.

Skill Area:					
Current Competency Level Date:	Beginning	Developing	Adequate	Proficient	Accomplished
Current Competency Level Date:	Beginning	Developing	Adequate	Proficient	Accomplished

Where and how have you demonstrated growth in this skill area? Give enough detail so you are confident in where you developed the skill. Note what skills were shown.	
Description	**Date**

Adapted from Career Services, University of Calgary

Goal Setting
the MAPS methods

Before you start exploring job opportunities, it can be helpful to set goals for your work search. When coming up with your own career goal, think of answers to questions such as, "What is important to me?" and "Where do I want to be a year from now?".

Sometimes just writing down a goal isn't enough to keep people motivated. The **MAPS method** used by Career Services allows you to follow a formula to achieve career success. The MAPS acronym stands for:

M   **Measurable:** The goal is quantifiable

A   **Achievable:** The goal is practical and possible

P   **Positive:** The goal won't negatively affect other areas of life

S   **Specific:** The goal states what is to be achieved and by when

> **Did you know?**
> People who write their goals are 42% more likely to achieve them.
> – Michael Hyatt[27]

Give it a try!
writing MAPS goals

Create your own MAPS goal based on something that you're hoping to accomplish in the next six months. If it helps, start with a general goal and then turn it into a MAPS goal using the formula above.

Main Goal:	Goal:
Meet professionals in the accounting industry.	
MAPS Goal:	**MAPS Goal:**
By the end of next month I will have attended the young professionals networking event hosted by Deloitte and connected with at least 3 new people.	

Tips for Success

Always write your goals in past tense. Even though you haven't done it yet, stating that by a given date you "will have" already achieved or accomplished something increases your commitment to that goal and you are more likely to follow through with it as a result.

The Action Plan

Big goals can be vague and seem too distant to do anything about now. As a result, it is sometimes hard to imagine where to start. Chunking is a technique that you can use to break down your bigger or more ambitious goals into smaller steps that can seem more manageable.

Give it a try!
create an action plan

Break your goal into actionable steps by completing the following exercise. Working backwards, write down the tasks you need to complete to achieve your goal and add dates you hope to have accomplished each task by. Remember to use past tense.

Main Goal	
	Date

Sub Goal #1	
	Date

Sub Goal #2	
	Date

Sub Goal #3	
	Date

Sub Goal #4	
	Date

Sub Goal #5	
	Date

Sub Goal #6	
	Date

References

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2 ucalgary.ca/mygradskills/Versatile-PhD

3 myidp.sciencecareers.org

4 haskayne.ucalgary.ca/hunter-centre

5 ucalgary.ca/mygradskills/3MT

6 eportfolio.ucalgary.ca

7 universityaffairs.ca

8 wp.quintcareers.com

9 fromphdtolife.com

10 myidp.sciencecareers.org

11 careerinsite.alberta.ca/careerinsite.aspx

12 careerlink.ucalgary.ca/home.htm

13 occinfo.alis.alberta.ca/occinfopreview

14 onetonline.org

15 glassdoor.ca

16 ucalgary.ca/mygradskills/Versatile-PhD

17 ucalgary.ca/alumni/connect

18 ucalgary.ca/mygradskills/Versatile-PhD

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skills-that-phds-need-for-their-job-is-a-critical-issue-
for-universities

20 careerlink.ucalgary.ca/home.htm

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student-services/formal-assessments

22 careerinsite.alberta.ca/careerinsite.aspx

23 ethicstool.com/core-values

24 lifevaluesinventory.org

25 onetcenter.org/IP.html

26 thebusinesscouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/
Developing-Canadas-Workforce-March.pdf

27 michaelhyatt.com/5-reasons-why-you-should-commit-
your-goals-to-writing.html

Notes

The career development process
Explore Options

In this chapter you will:

- Explore potential career options and begin your job search

- Learn networking basics, including how to prepare an elevator pitch and do an informational interview

- Learn how to use social media as a professional platform

- Explore work experience opportunities through internships and entrepreneurship

Now that you have a better understanding of your values, interests, skills, strengths, and personality, it's time to start looking into career options that might be best suited for you after you graduate. Although you're still a graduate student, the academic environment is a great place to start developing your career. In fact, if you've ever been employed in a paid or volunteer position you already have career experience to draw on.

There are many ways to explore your career options. This chapter presents a collection of resources and strategies that you can use to build your professional presence and start your job search. Some may be more applicable than others, so use this chapter as you see fit. Whether you're interested in a job in or outside of academia, exploring career options while you're pursuing your graduate degree will help you to get better connected in your field and develop key skills transferable to the world of work.

Chapter Snapshot

Career Exploration Resources

There are many ways to find out about job opportunities in your field of study. Now that you've identified some career options that would be a good fit for you, it's time to begin exploring them. You might already have an idea about the type of employers you want to work for, or maybe you want to be an entrepreneur. Taking the time to research your options will allow you to gather more information and target your work search.

Because companies and jobs are constantly changing, **career expert Dr. C. K. Bray suggests that you look at jobs rather than for jobs** when exploring career options. Take the time to think about how a field might be growing to identify future opportunities, and consider where your skills would be a good fit in different organizations and sectors, even those that aren't directly related to your graduate degree. This will not only increase your job prospects, but also help you stay on the cutting edge of the job market.

In the sections that follow you'll learn about a variety of work search options, including using job postings, networking, doing informational interviews, getting involved in work experience, and using social media. You may have already had the opportunity to explore some of these. Throughout your time as a graduate student, you're encouraged to gain experience in all of these different methods of work search so you can **build your connections and maximize your success.**

JOB POSTINGS

SOCIAL MEDIA

Methods of Career Exploration

NETWORKING

WORK EXPERIENCE

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING
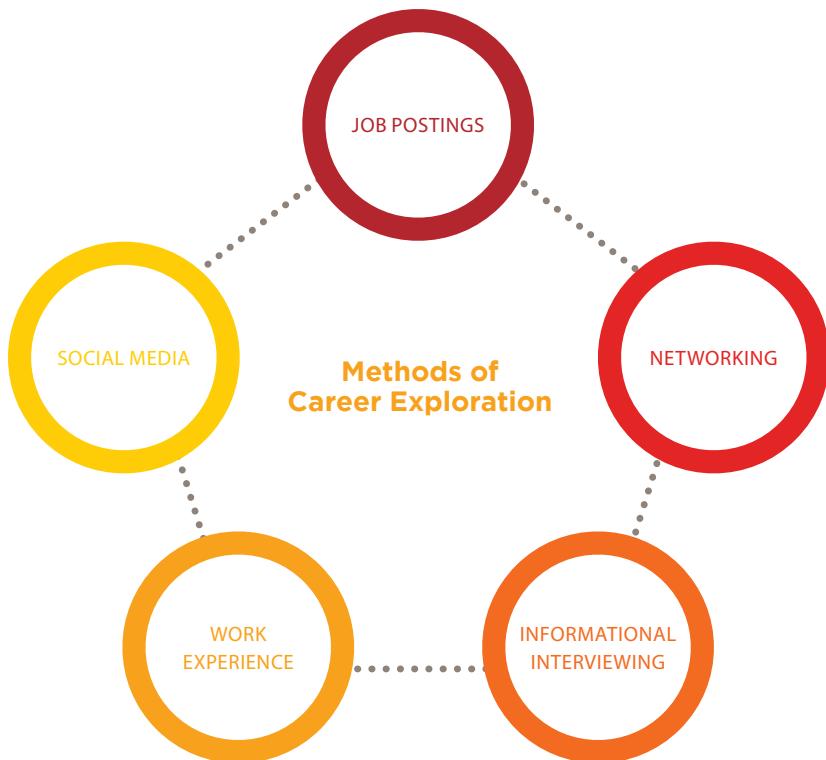
Helpful Resource

Need help finding jobs you can do with your degree? Do a LinkedIn search for graduates from the University of Calgary using the Find Alumni tool to get information about where they're employed. You can also learn about occupational profiles in Alberta using the ALIS OCCinfo page[1], which connects you with details about job duties, working conditions, employment outlooks, and salary ranges for jobs.

Career Sector Lists

Having a graduate degree opens doors to a variety of career paths. While you may think that your only option is to stay within your field, your degree does not define the type of work you can do. Try not to think of your career as a job title. Instead, focus more generally on the type of work that interests you. Versatile PhD has developed a comprehensive list of industries that graduate students with a degree like yours are employed in. You can use this list to start brainstorming possible careers that you may want to pursue.

Helpful Resource

For more information about the industries listed below visit the Versatile PhD Career Finder[2] webpage. Here you'll find real examples of resumes from professionals in these fields, as well as Q & A and other stories from people who changed their career path to enter this industry.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)	
• Biotechnology	• K-12 Education
• Clinical Practice	• Marketing
• Clinical Research Management	• Non-profits
• Consulting	• Patent Law
• Data Science & Software Development	• Public Health
• Entrepreneurship	• Research Administration
• E-Learning & Instructional Design	• Sales & Marketing
• Finance	• Science & Medical Writing/Testing
• Government	• Science Outreach & Policy
• Industry Research	• Technology Commercialization
• Intellectual Property	• University Administration

Social Sciences and Humanities	
• Advocacy	• K-12 Education
• Assessment & Analysis	• Law & Mediation
• Business	• Marketing
• Communication & Public Relations	• Management
• Consulting	• Non-profits
• Data Management	• Program Evaluation
• Development & Fundraising	• Publishing & Editing
• E-learning & Institutional Design	• Research Administration
• Entrepreneurship	• Technology
• Institutional Research	• Translation & Interpretation
• Government	• University Administration

Helpful Resource

For more ideas about potential careers, check out Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius' recently published book, So What Are You Going to Do with That?: Finding Careers Outside Academia. Packed with advice, this book offers concrete tips and stories from real people with graduate degrees who have been successful at making the transition from academia to the workforce.

Job Postings

Searching online job postings is a great way to do a broad search for career opportunities. While looking through postings can be overwhelming, you can target your search by customizing the types of jobs your search returns. For example, try limiting your search to certain industries, companies, job titles, locations, or salaries. Many of these websites also allow you to post your resume, inviting companies to find you online.

Rather than a job bank being your final destination, consider the value in reverse job searching, where you start with job banks to identify available positions, and then find other ways to connect with these employers, such as through networking or informational interviewing. Remember that because so many people use online ads to find work, this approach alone is unlikely to get you a job. You can enhance your search with other resources discussed throughout this chapter. If you're an international student, be sure to check with your immigration consultant through International Student Services that you're eligible to work and/or volunteer during your stay in Canada.

Student Jobs

Find meaningful work, explore potential careers, and develop skills essential to your field while in graduate school. These employers know you're a student and tend to be flexible as a result. Positions are available specifically to students as well as alumni (usually up to one year after graduating).

• CareerLink[3] – Connects University of Calgary students and alumni with job outlook, salary, and labour market information from potential employers

• Talent Egg[4] – Find work exclusively for students and graduates interested in entry level and early career jobs

Volunteer Positions

Build your resume on campus by becoming involved in volunteer opportunities for graduate students. Whether you're interested in joining a committee or serving as a peer helper to support other students in their academic and career development, becoming a volunteer will provide you with skills in teamwork, leadership, and problem solving that are valued in almost any workplace.

• Graduate Students' Association[5]

• Student Success Centre[6]

• Career Services[7]

Non-Profit Opportunities

If you're passionate about a social cause or being employed in an advocacy role, working for a non-profit organization may be a good fit. These positions will help you develop your people and communication skills, as well as your ability to be innovative and creative. The following sites for non-profit professionals connect you with employment opportunities specific to Canada and Alberta.

• Charity Village[8] – The #1 website for non-profit professionals across Canada

• Reach Hire[9] – Find non-profit positions available within the province of Alberta

• Work In Non-Profits[10] – connects non-profits across Canada with jobseekers

Government Positions

If you're interested in public service jobs and enhancing your community, consider careers available through your city, province, or country. Being employed with government can lead to opportunities in a variety of sectors from business and leisure services to the social sciences and STEM fields. These positions are often good opportunities to develop your management potential and teamwork abilities.

• City of Calgary[11]

• Government of Alberta[12]

• Government of Canada[13]

Academic and Alternative Academic Jobs

Colleges and universities in Alberta hire for both academic and alternative academic positions. However, if you're looking to expand your job search, you might want to consider checking out these popular job boards.

• Academic Work[14] – Find academic careers in Canada and abroad

• University Affairs[15] – A search engine for academic positions within Canada

• Chronicle Vitae[16] – Browse academic jobs both nationally and internationally

• Inside Higher Ed[17] – Access to job opportunities focused in the United States

For more resources check out the Job Search Engines[18] posted by the university.

Vertical Search Engines

Vertical search engines are popular websites that search thousands of job boards, employment, and career sites across Canada. These websites offer options to tailor your job search to find a specific position in your field or location of interest.

• Eluta Canada[19] – The official job search engine for Canada's Top 100 Employers

• Indeed[20] – North America's #1 online job search engine

• Other Search Engines Wow Jobs[21], Monster[22], Canada Job Bank[23]

Helpful Resource

The vertical search engine Eluta Canada allows you to find the best employers in your field based on the name of your degree, your field of study, and your location. Tailor your job search to the Masters or Doctorate degree that you're currently enrolled in and you'll instantly be connected to a career directory of Canada's best employers for graduates within the current year.

Working in Canada - Information for International Students

One of the major career obstacles faced by international students is a lack of work experience in the host country. International students often deal with unique barriers to finding employment that makes it more difficult to pursue their career goals. If you're an international student, you can use this checklist to help you plan for your career in Canada and beyond:

☐ Check with your immigration consultant that you're eligible to work in Canada. If you aren't able to maintain paid employment, there may be other opportunities for you to advance your career, such as through volunteering or extracurricular activities.

☐ Connect with an immigration advisor at International Student Services[24] who can help you find services and resources at the university and in the city of Calgary.

☐ Visit the "Working in Canada as a Student" page on the International Student Services[25] website to learn about your options for working in Canada while you're a student and after you've graduated.

☐ Meet with the International Career Development Specialist at Career Services who can help you write a Canadian resume and cover letter, adjust to the Canadian workplace culture, and plan your job search.

☐ Attend Career Services workshops designed specifically for International Students.

☐ Familiarize yourself with Canadian workplace culture. Use the resource below as a starting point to help you understand what employers expect from people who are working for them.

☐ If you plan to return to your home country, be sure to keep up-to-date on what's happening in the job market there. LinkedIn can be a great way to stay connected with professionals back home.

Helpful Resource

The Government of Alberta[26] has created a Welcome to Alberta package for newcomers. Part of this resource talks about workplace culture in Alberta, which suggests that employers expect their employees to have the following qualities:

Reliable: Arrive at work on time, meet expected deadlines, and provide as much notice as possible if you need to miss work.

Friendly: Be respectful to everyone you work with, regardless of their status or position in the company. Maintain a positive attitude towards your work and the people you work with.

Responsible: If you don't know how to do something or don't understand instructions, ask for help. When you make a mistake, take responsibility for and learn from it.

Efficient: Complete your work in the time that you're given. Although managers make the major decisions, employers appreciate employees who take initiative if something needs to be done.

Flexible: Be willing to learn on the job and accept unexpected changes, such as a change in schedule or working on a different team.

Working Internationally - Information for Canadian Students

As a Canadian student, you may want to have the experience of working abroad. With the world becoming increasingly globalized, companies are looking for candidates with a broad range of skills and experiences. Working abroad can make you more competitive by giving you the opportunity to build cultural awareness, develop your language skills, and showcase your adaptability and flexibility.

As a student of the University of Calgary, you have free access to the following websites that can help you with your international job search:

Going Global: goinglobal.com

My World Abroad: myworldabroad.com

Networking

Networking can be an intimidating experience, even for the most skillful speakers. However, it's the single most effective way to find work. According to ALIS, between 70-80% of all jobs are found through networking[27]. Networking is a great way to turn a contact into a connection and develop professional relationships. People are more likely to do business with someone they know and trust, and the best way to build that trust is through networking. As a graduate student, you've probably attended events or conferences where networking was encouraged or even expected. But if you don't know where to begin, this can seem like an impossible task. Whether you're looking for employment within academia or beyond, having the ability to network will prove to be an invaluable resource going forward.

Helpful Resource

The University of Calgary offers on campus print, office, and creative services where you can design and print your personalized professional business cards. By including university branding you'll not only create a strong impression, but also communicate your professional affiliation. Email **mygradskills@ucalgary.ca** to learn how.

How to Start, Maintain, and End a Conversation with Someone

Starting a conversation: One of the easiest ways to connect with someone is to find common ground. If you already know in advance whom you want to talk to, do some research and find something you can both relate to. Whether it's their previous research, an initiative they're involved in, or some other part of their background that interests you, come prepared with questions to ask.

Maintaining a conversation: When you show an interest in people you meet, they naturally do the same. More than ask questions, be sure that you really listen to their answer. Show you care about the conversation and are curious about the topic by engaging with what the other person is saying.

Ending a conversation: Before you leave, make sure to highlight what you found interesting about the conversation. If you're interested in knowing more, express that to the person you've been networking with and ask for their business card so you can follow up with them. Come prepared with a handful of your own business or contact cards to give out to the people you connect with.

Tip for Success

Whether you're at a conference, event, or social gathering, here are some conversation starters and questions worth asking when networking:

1. Tell me about your role at your organization.

2. What is happening in your industry?

3. How often do you attend these events?

4. What do you know about today's speaker?

5. What has your favourite session been today?

Asking open-ended rather than yes/no questions is a great way to start a conversation and engage the person you are talking to.

Helpful Resource

Can you be a leader while still in graduate school? According to Drew Dudley, the answer is yes! In his Toronto TedTalk "Leading with Lollipops[28]," explore with Drew how you can impact the lives of people around you as a leader and a change maker.

The Power of Positive Networking

Rather than enter a networking situation thinking about what someone can do for you, try to focus on what you can do for others. Positive networking is the idea that connecting is more about the relationships you build with people than the things people do for you. Networking in this way becomes an opportunity to open relationships, rather than to close deals. According to networking specialists at the Shepa Learning Company[29] (the organization that coined the term positive networking), this approach is more likely to build relationships that are sustainable and beneficial for both parties.

As a graduate student, you may feel you don't have a lot to offer in a networking situation, but this isn't the case. Graduate school trains you to be an expert in your field, which puts you at the cutting edge of emerging ideas. By reading journals, staying involved in research, and attending workshops or events, you have access to a wealth of knowledge that people who work outside of academia may be disconnected from.

Graduate school is a great time to start networking because you typically get student rates at conferences and other social events or presentations. As a student, you also have access to free networking events and talks hosted at the university. A good rule of thumb is to try and attend at least a couple of conferences each year with unique attendees whose career interests overlap with yours. When networking, it's important to try and balance meeting new people with strengthening the relationships you've already built. If you're not yet ready to try networking face-to-face, you can get your feet wet with these virtual events:

Beyond the Professoriate[30]
A virtual conference for PhDs who are in career transition that features two days of presentations from and discussion with PhDs who are working in a variety of jobs and careers outside of academia.

Alumni Connect[31]
After you graduate, connect with other alumni through this online networking platform. Take part in chats on current issues, professional development, and more from your computer or mobile phone.

Tip for Success

It's good to have an idea of what you want to say to people when networking, but how you present yourself can be just as important. Here are some tips to help you feel more confident:

Shake hands: When you meet someone and when you leave them, pair your greeting with a handshake. Being the one to initiate this exchange shows you are confident and approachable.

Communicate non-verbally: You can say a lot just with your body. When networking, smile often and maintain regular eye contact with the person you're speaking to. Keep an open posture by facing your body towards the other person and keeping your arms at your sides, rather than crossed.

Overcome awkward pauses: If the conversation stops and you don't know what to say, one solution is to ask the person you're speaking with to "tell me more." This prompts them to continue the conversation and also shows your interest in what they have to say.

Preparing an Elevator Pitch

Through networking and other experiences you'll introduce yourself to many people. As a graduate student, it can be hard to know what to say to someone when they ask, "what do you do?" especially if they aren't an academic. Coming prepared with a way of presenting yourself can alleviate some of that stress and help you get through the most difficult part of any conversation – the beginning. Having a way to break the ice will make introductions easier and lead to a deeper, more meaningful dialogue. This introduction, known as an elevator pitch, is a way of presenting yourself in 30 seconds or less.

Remember that even though you're coming prepared with something to say, the conversation you have should be natural. You may want to use the elevator pitch as a template, but it's always more important to be present and engaged in the conversation. Think of your elevator pitch as a backup in case you find yourself struggling to find what to say. Here's some ideas of things you might want to talk about:

What you do:
What is your background? Specialization? Strengths? Interests? Qualifications?

Who you are:
What is your name?
Degree? Field?
Post-secondary institution?

What you want to do:
What are you looking for? What are your hopes for the future of your career?
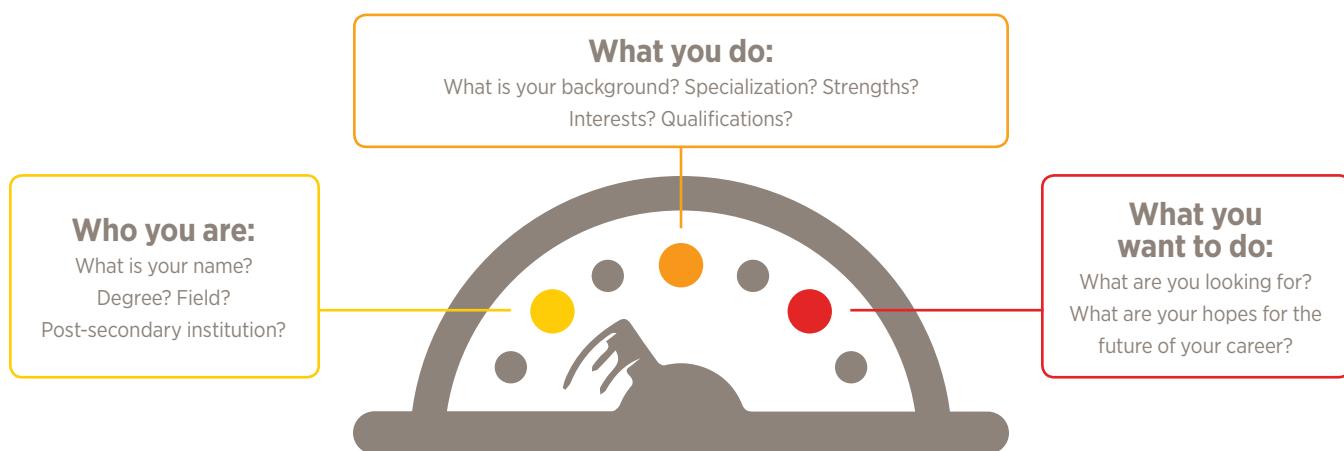
Give it a try!
write an elevator pitch

Imagine that you're meeting a potential employer for the first time. Using the sample below as a template, write your elevator pitch in the space provided and practice it on friends and family until it feels natural and comfortable. Remember to try and keep it under 30 seconds.

Example:

Hello [their first name],

Who you are: I am completing my PhD in computer science and will be graduating from the University of Calgary this May.

What you do: For the past several months I have been involved in a research internship with Intel where I am developing my skills in software development.

What you want to do: With this knowledge I hope to secure an entry-level role at a technology company to further pursue my interests in product development.

Building a Network of Acquaintances

In the world of networking it's important to connect with people you don't already know. According to ALIS[32], **acquaintances are more helpful in your work search than people close to you.** This is because they're more likely to know people and job opportunities that you haven't already heard about. Not only that, but because your acquaintances don't know you from another context, these new contacts may find it easier to see you as a **professional,** rather than a graduate student or a friend.

Helpful Resource

Did you know that as a student of the University of Calgary you are a member of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce[33]? Attending chamber and member events or workshops can be great networking opportunities and a chance for you to meet other people in the community.

Start brainstorming what people in your network might be good contacts to reach out to. Give them your elevator pitch and ask whether they know anyone they can put you in touch with. Keep a current list of these people and their contact information for reference below. You may also want to create a separate file or spread sheet on your computer with this information.

Always keep in mind that networking doesn't end when you get a job. Connecting with people is something that you'll continue to do throughout your career. Whether you're looking to expand your career, in need of advice, or interested in collaborating with someone, having people in your network that can support you professionally will come in handy, even after you have a job.

My Network		
Name	Position/Job Title and Organization	Contact Information
Brendan Sardana	Project Advisor – City of Calgary	Phone: 587.555.1234 Email: btam@calgary.ab.ca

Workshops and Events

Networking Skills

Mitacs is an organization that builds partnerships between academia and industry and offers students a full-day workshop designed to help you build relationships through effective networking. Participate in actual networking exercises and learn how to build a network both online and in person.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Featured Workshops

The University of Calgary's Career Services hosts a number of free networking events on campus. Here you'll have the chance to learn and practice your networking skills in a student-friendly environment before going out into the community.

Tip for Success

Set a goal for yourself to push your comfort zone and get out to network at least once a month. Whether you attend a workshop, register for a conference, do an informational interview, or simply spark up a conversation with someone on campus, meeting new people face-to-face is the best way to build relationships. While not every connection you make will prove valuable for your career, you'll increase your chances of building successful relationships by taking these opportunities to engage with others.

Workshops and Events

Introduction to Job Search and Networking for Non-Academic Careers

By attending this Career Services workshop, you'll learn the fundamentals of doing a job search, including how to research careers and industries, and create an action plan. You will also learn how to prepare for, target, connect, and follow up with professionals online and in person.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Networking 101
In this workshop presented by Career Services you'll learn first hand from guest speakers how to start conversations during a networking event, dress appropriately for the occasion, and ask the right questions. This interactive workshop is a required prerequisite for the Networking Gala.

Networking Gala
Put your networking skills into practice by making connections with industry professionals, staff, and fellow students at the Networking Gala hosted by Career Services in the fall and winter semesters.

Information Sessions
Attend an information session arranged by Career Services to meet recruiters and experts in your field of study and learn about the culture, hiring processes, and opportunities available within a particular organization.

Networking 201: Professional Networking Skills for Graduate Students
Further enhance and apply your networking skills in this interactive workshop where you will learn advanced strategies for maintaining conversations at networking events, including how to follow up to strengthen professional relationships and create further opportunities for new connections.
(Endorsed by My GradSkills)

PhD LIVEbrary
Join professionals with graduate degrees from a variety of backgrounds for 15-minute one-on-one informational interviews to learn more about their interesting jobs. Take this time to both network and learn about your career possibilities in career LIVEbrary events specific to graduate students.

Informational Interviewing

What is an informational interview?
An informational interview is an interview or conversation that you have with someone who is working in a field, job, or organization that you're interested in.

What is it not?
Unlike a traditional interview, you're not asking for a job, but for advice and insight. Even though you may be interested in working for the organization, this shouldn't be a topic of conversation. Rather than talk about yourself and what you offer, take this opportunity to ask about the person you're interviewing and their role.

Why are they important?
This is a chance for you as a graduate student to learn firsthand about an organization or career path that you're interested in pursuing. The informational interview is a great chance to learn about various careers, the skills you'll need to develop during your graduate training, and what it's like to be employed in a particular field or with a specific organization. More than a job description, informational interviews can offer you details about the day-to-day activities of someone in an area that interests you.

This is also a way for you to expand your network. While not the purpose of the interview, having these conversations may provide you with access to the hidden job market by discovering job openings before they're posted. Having this contact may also serve as a connection down the road to future job opportunities.

Tip for Success

Join LinkedIn groups (e.g., PhD Careers Outside of Academia), social networks, and professional associations related to your profession. This will help you establish personal connections and create opportunities to do informational interviews with people you meet.

What does an informational interview look like?
The remainder of this section will focus on how you as a graduate student can go about doing a successful informational interview in your field. While the interview itself is the most discussed portion of this process, the majority of your work will be done before and after the actual interview. The following four steps will help you prepare for and do an informational interview that is both informative and professional.

SCHEDULE THE MEETING → PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW → CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW → FOLLOW UP
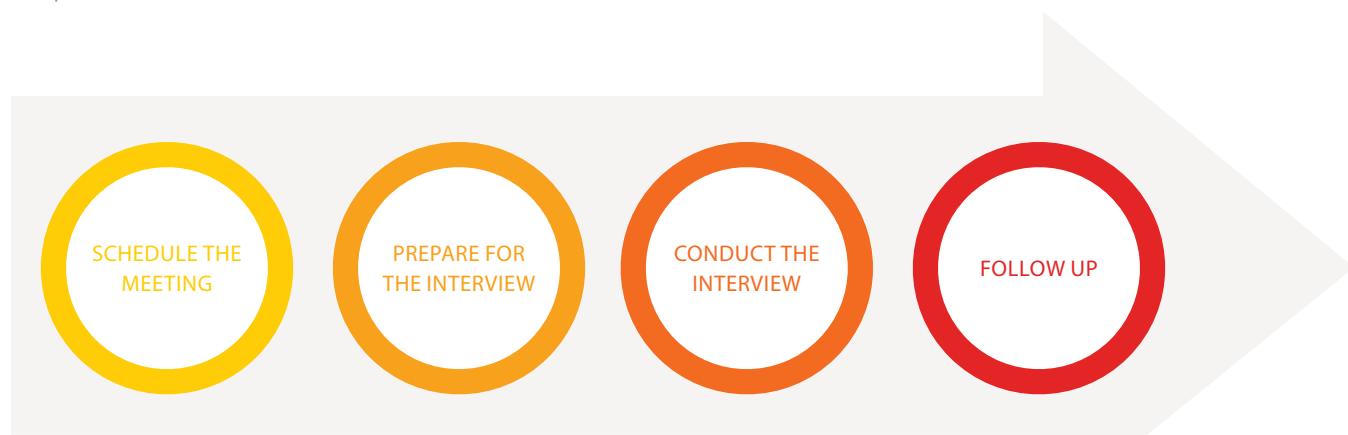
Schedule the Meeting

It can be intimidating to call someone you don't know who works in an industry you're hoping to get into. However, it turns out that most people are not only happy to talk about their experiences, but are also willing to meet with you to share that information. If informational interviewing makes you uneasy, start the search within your own network and branch out from there. Often, having a common connection with someone who you're interested in speaking with can make this process feel more personal.

Once you've found the person you wish to speak with, the next step is to contact them and schedule a meeting. This initial contact can either be made over the phone, by email, or both. However, emails are often the preferred method, as it gives the person time to respond to your request. When you're asking for an informational interview, always contact the person directly. Unless informed otherwise, try to avoid calling a front desk or administrative staff member when inquiring about informational interviews.

When writing an email to request an informational interview, keep it concise. The person you're requesting to meet with likely receives many emails throughout the day, and it's important that you make an impression in a short amount of time. To do this, break your message up into the following small chunks of information:

Send

To...

Cc...

Subject: Informational Interview Request

Dear Mr. or Ms. (their last name), **A**

My name is (your name) and I am a graduate student at the University of Calgary in the (faculty name) program. I came across your name (explain where and how) and would be interested in speaking with you about your professional experiences and (highlight something specific if relevant). I am currently conducting career research in the (name of workplace sector) and would appreciate the opportunity to learn about your career path. **B**

I would appreciate 15-20 minutes of your time to discuss these topics and would be happy to meet at a time and location most convenient for you. Thank you in advance for your time and I look forward to the opportunity to connect with you further. **C**

Sincerely,
(Your full name and contact information) **D**

A
Open with an appropriate greeting and address the person by their last name.

B
Explain who you are and how you heard of them.

C
Explain why you're sending this email.

D
Finish with your name and contact information.

Prepare for the Interview

Prepare for an informational interview like you would a job interview by gaining as much information as you can about the person you'll be speaking with and the organization they work for. This will be a lot like using the research skills you have developed during your graduate degree. Checking the organization's website or even looking into the LinkedIn pages of people who work there can give you some important insight. Not only will this help you during the interview to engage in more meaningful and informed conversation, but it can also give you some ideas about the questions you might want to ask or curiosities you have.

Tip for Success

Never schedule two informational interviews within 2 hours of each other. Although you're only asking for 15-20 minutes of their time, you don't want to have to leave in a rush if it goes over.

Make it Personal

Make your conversation more personal by adding in observations you've made about the person you speak with. Referencing their previous work or inquiring about a project they were involved in will go a long way in demonstrating your enthusiasm about meeting with them.

Dress the Part

While you're not going for a job interview, dress as if you were. As a graduate student who will be networking and interviewing with professionals, it's important to look and act the part. Part of making a good first impression is demonstrating your fit within that organization, and this includes the way you present yourself. While your specific attire will depend on the organizational culture, a good rule of thumb is to dress for the position you're interested in or one position higher.

Be Ready for Anything

If you're unfamiliar with the place of business where you'll be doing your informational interview, drive or take transit to the location a couple of days ahead of time to get to know the area. This includes knowing where to find public parking and how to get to the office. You'll also want to be prepared to share some information about yourself, so be sure to have an elevator pitch (see page 40) ready in advance. Finally, bring your personal business card to offer the person who you interviewed.

Workshops and Events

Information Interviewing:
A Strategic Tool for Job Searching

Join the Graduate Students' Association and learn how informational interviews allow you to identify the skills employers want in your field, what kind of career options are available, and how to build your professional network and tap into the hidden job market.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Conduct the Interview

There will probably be a lot of questions you want answered from the person you're interviewing.
When coming up with questions, ask yourself: What sort of information am I looking for?
In case you get nervous during the interview, write your questions down so you don't forget them.
You'll only have 15-20 minutes with this individual, so try to limit yourself to five or six questions.
Remember that although it's called an interview, this should feel more like a conversation.
Express enthusiasm and interest by asking follow-up questions and engaging with the other person.

Descriptive Questions
Allow you to get a sense of the job

- Tell me about your typical day at work.
- What skills or experiences are the most valuable to have in your field?
- What qualifications are required for someone to work in this position?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What are some challenges of your work?
- How did you get started in this field?
- Tell me about your career path and how you got your current position.

Opinion Questions
Allow you to explore the person's opinion about their industry or job

- Where do you see your career or position within this organization going from here?
- What opinion do you have of your industry?
- What is your impression of how your industry/ organization will grow or change in 5 years?
- What are some of the challenges that your industry is currently facing?
- What are some of the long-term trends in your organization or business?
- What do you think has made you successful throughout your career?

Advice Questions
Allow you to seek out specific advice

- What experience would be valuable to have before getting a job in this industry?
- What skills did you gain from your (graduate) education that helped you in your career?
- What advice do you have for someone with my background that wants to enter this field?
- Can you suggest an additional contact that might be willing to share their experiences?

Follow Up

After the informational interview, it's customary to send the person you spoke with a card, an email, or give them a phone call to thank them for taking the time to meet with you. The sooner you can reach out to them the better. Experts recommend doing this immediately following your meeting so the information is fresh in your mind.

It is important to personalize your thank you by expressing to the person what you gained from your time together. Reflect on things from the meeting that you were excited about or that you learned and mention them in your thank you to make it more personal. If you've written a card, stop by the front desk of the employee's office within 24 hours of your informational interview to deliver the card to reception.

Tip for Success

A few weeks after your informational interview be sure to follow up via email with an update of any connections you've made with contacts they've suggested, as well as details about progress made in your job search. Feel free to connect over other topics you discussed as well, such as by sending an article of interest, or wishing them a good summer.

Dear Mr. Smith,

Thank you for speaking with me this afternoon. It was fascinating to hear about your personal career path in addition to learning about the internal structure of The Company, Inc. It was both informative and encouraging to learn about your success in this field.

I greatly appreciate your advice on seeking out an internship opportunity within your organization. At your suggestion, I have contacted Teresa Field about the matter and will be meeting with her next week. I truly appreciate your willingness to speak with me and look forward to staying in touch.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Jorgen

Frequently Asked Questions

What if my interview goes over 20 minutes?

Keep an eye on the clock during your informational interview. If you notice you're over the 15-20 minutes, politely bring this to the person's attention by saying, "I am conscious of the time and want to be respectful of your schedule. Is there any way that we might be able to continue this conversation now or at a later date?"

What if they ask for my resume?

If the person you're speaking with asks for your resume you can always offer to send it to them. Although it's improper to bring your resume to an informational interview or offer one to the person you're speaking with, if they ask for your resume feel free to let them know that you'll email them a copy after the interview.

What if they want to meet for coffee or lunch?

It's not uncommon for someone to want to meet outside of the office to do an informational interview. Always leave it up to the person you're interviewing to choose a time and location. Although it's expected that you'll be flexible in agreeing to a location, don't agree to go somewhere you're not comfortable. Make sure your meeting is in a public place and that it doesn't happen too late in the evening. If you're meeting for a coffee or a meal, it's also customary to offer to pay the bill at the end of the interview.

What if I actually want to get a job there?

It's OK to express to the person you're speaking with your interest in the organization. However, keep in mind that this isn't the purpose of your interview. Especially if there are no current job postings at the organization, informational interviews can be a great way to tap into the hidden job market and make connections that may be able to provide you with information about job openings in the future.

Workshops and Events

Grad and PhD Career LIVEbrary

Take part in a Career LIVEbrary event hosted by Career Services where you'll have the opportunity to sign up for one-on-one informational interviews on campus with a variety of professionals with graduate degrees who are working in related industries. Not only will this help you with your interviewing skills, but it will also allow you to learn more about your career possibilities and network with professionals in your field. This can be a great place to start building connections for future informational interviews down the road.

Using Social Media

Your job search can take place through many different avenues. Maintaining a strong digital presence is one way to add value to your personal network. Using social media can also allow you to contact and connect with people you may not have the opportunity to meet otherwise. While using social media may not itself be networking, it can help you build and maintain your professional contacts.

in LinkedIn

The largest network for professionals globally, LinkedIn gives you the opportunity to develop a career profile in an online social setting where you can connect with other graduate students, university alumni, potential employers, and a variety of other contacts and groups.

Did you know?
Nearly **95%** of recruiters search for job candidates using LinkedIn.
– Social Recruiting Survey[34]

Building a Profile

Designing your LinkedIn profile is almost like writing a resume. This is a way for you to present yourself in a professional manner and showcase some of your skills, experiences, and achievements. Having a strong introduction to your profile will increase the likelihood of people interacting with your page and contacting you in the future. Here is how to do it:

1 **Create a headline** that will serve as your online elevator pitch. Your headline should be a short but memorable professional slogan about your areas of interest or expertise, and what opportunities you're looking for on LinkedIn.

2 **Choose a profile picture** where you're alone and appropriately dressed. Use a current and welcoming photo. Profiles with pictures are 7 times more likely to be viewed.
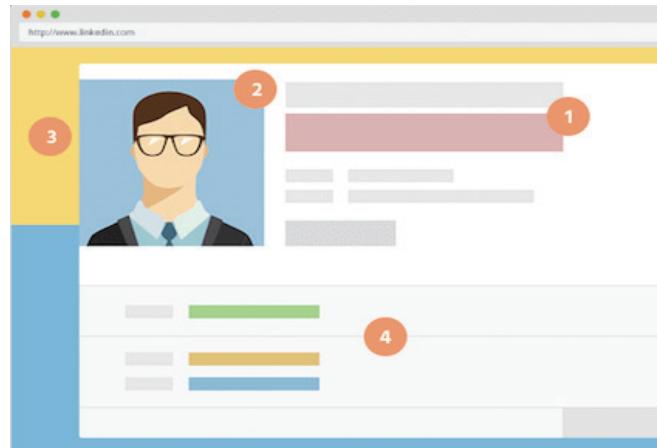
3 **Customize your URL** by changing the default link to one that includes your full name. This will increase the professional results that appear when people search for you online, and also make your page more easily accessible to people within and outside of your network.

4 **Include your contact information** in the summary of your page by listing an email address and any other relevant information such as a Twitter handle or link to your ePortfolio. Even though this information will already appear in the "contact information" section of your profile, only your direct connections have access to this. Adding these details to your summary will allow people outside of your network to connect with you.

Tip for Success

Remember that unless you change your privacy settings, all of your social media pages are public by default. While you may deem it best to make your settings private, allowing potential employers to view your page can work to your advantage. According to the social media monitoring site Reppler[35], 70% of employers using social media to screen employees make a decision about hiring a potential candidate based on what they saw on social networking sites. You may also want to consider having both a personal and a professional account among your social media channels.

LinkedIn Profile Checklist

Ensure that the following sections of your LinkedIn profile are filled out and updated on a regular basis. According to LinkedIn, members that have 100% complete profiles get approximately 40 times more opportunities and visits to their page[36], so be sure to invest the time in creating a profile that is both comprehensive and up to date.

☐ **Summary:** Write a short summary that includes information about your qualifications, skills, relevant work or extracurricular activities, and accomplishments. Be sure to include a brief statement about your plans and goals for the future. Feel free to use your headline as a template when writing this section.

☐ **Experience:** List any previous and/or current jobs that you have, along with what you accomplished at each. You can also share examples of your work by including rich media or documents such as photos, videos, or excerpts of writing that you're particularly proud of.

☐ **Organizations:** Include information about any clubs or committees that you're involved in. You can also describe what you did with each organization including transferable skills that you developed and your accomplishments or successes.

☐ **Education:** Start this section with your graduate degree, followed by all of your additional post-secondary training. Include information about your institution, majors and minors, thesis title, courses, and program.

☐ **Volunteer Experiences and Causes:** Showcase volunteer experiences and highlight organizations and causes that you care about. According to LinkedIn, 42% of hiring managers view volunteer experience equal to formal work experience, and 1 in 5 has chosen a candidate based on their previous volunteer work[37].

☐ **Skills and Experience:** Add at least five key skills relevant to careers that appeal to you. You can use the alumni tool to search the profiles of people who have jobs you want and pick similar skills as them. This is also a good way to

identify areas you may need further development. Your connections can then endorse you for the things that you're best at and you can do the same for them in return.

☐ **Honours and Awards:** List your accomplishments to optimize your profile for talent seekers. These can include awards received through academia, extracurricular activities, or other sources.

☐ **Courses:** Include the names of classes that show off the skills and interests relevant to jobs that appeal to you. Remember to list these by course name, not course number.

☐ **Projects:** Promote your projects by listing anything from course assignments to entrepreneurial activities. You can also treat your thesis like a project and list it in this section. Make sure to include the name of the project and information about what you did and how. If relevant, you can also include a URL that will direct viewers to the project's website.

☐ **Recommendations:** Ask employers, colleagues, professors, clients, or classmates who have worked with you closely to write a recommendation on your behalf. This will add credibility to your skills and strengths. Try to get a range of recommendations from people you've collaborated with in unique settings.

☐ **Publications:** List not only your peer-reviewed work, but also other relevant writing (such as blog posts) with links to the articles. Even if you're looking for employment outside of academia, your publications are a great way to show your interests and your written communication skills.

To Do List This Month:

1. Finish profile (90% or higher)

2. Connect with at least 10 people
   (start building a network of acquaintances)

3. Visit LinkedIn at least once a week to post
   updates and interact with connections

4. Connect with at least two new alumni

5. Join three LinkedIn groups
   a. Alumni group
   b. Group in field of study
   c. Professional Association
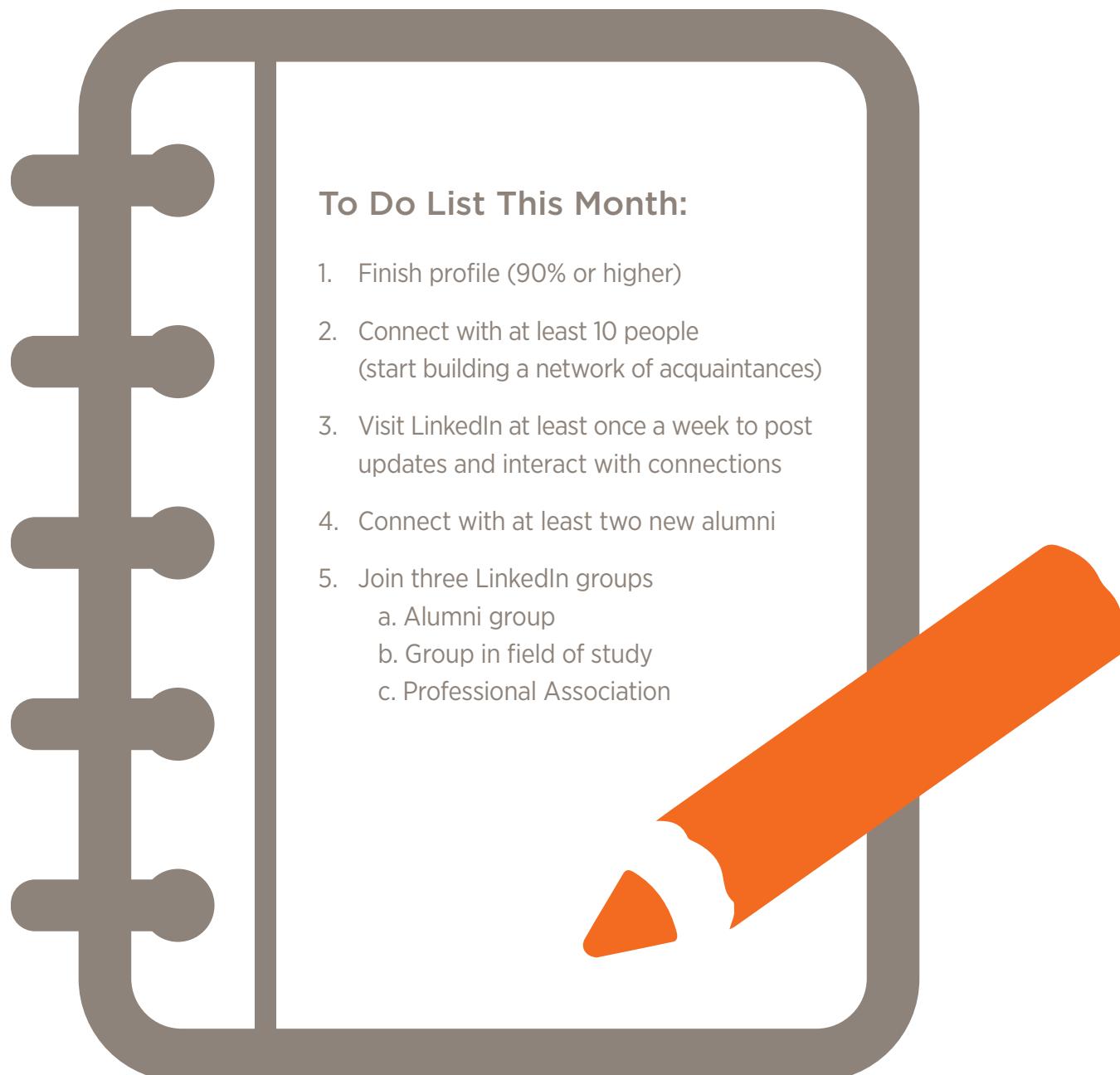
Helpful Resource

Looking for opportunities to advance your research and publications? Research Gate[38] allows you to connect and collaborate with researchers around the world, join open discussions with authors and other experts, and create exposure for your work by sharing it with other members.

Building Your Network

As a graduate student, you have access to a variety of networks through LinkedIn, some of which have been suggested below. When reaching out to potential contacts, always customize your request to connect with a friendly note. You can do this by providing your contact with information about where you met or whom you met through, why you're interested to connect with them, or what you have in common.

You likely won't maintain close contact with all of your connections, but it's nice to know that someone in your network is one click away if you need them or if they need you. While you don't have to reach out to each of your contacts individually, stay involved in your network by interacting with the posts of others and regularly adding your own updates. Here are some easy ways to stay connected:

Stay on your network's radar by updating your status regularly with what you're working on or other interests

Interact with other postings from your contacts by making meaningful comments and sharing your opinion

Reach out to alumni for an insider perspective and get your foot in the door to learn more about career opportunities and options

Reach beyond your immediate network and do an advanced search for people based on job title, industry, company, or location

Join groups to form connections. Start with your university groups and then find organizations and associations you belong to

Connect with people based on common interests and join the pages of companies or industries you're interested in

Workshops and Events

LinkedIn Lab

This hands-on lab offered through Career Services teaches students how to create an effective LinkedIn profile and optimize your account by joining groups, researching companies, and connecting with others. Learn how this platform can be used both for job searching and networking.

Twitter

You may not have considered Twitter a professional networking site, but graduate students and employers are increasingly using it to develop their professional presence. According to the social media monitoring site Reppler[39], 53% of recruiters are using Twitter to find job candidates. Here are some ways that you can get started and optimize your Twitter feed:

1

Write a Strong Bio: This is one of the only opportunities you'll have on Twitter to promote yourself, so make good use of it! Try to balance personal information with professional details and provide a link to your LinkedIn page or ePortfolio so that people can find more information if they're interested.

2

Tweet Often: Use Twitter to connect with people by tweeting about professional topics of interest. Engage your followers and add professional value to your tweets by asking questions, voicing your opinion, or sharing interesting articles, books, and information. Given that you're a graduate student and in the market for a job, be sure to keep your tweets professional. Recruiters and potential employers may be checking your page and your previous tweets, so keep that in mind when adding content to your feed.

3

Make use of Rich Media: Trying to get a message across in 140 characters or less can be difficult. Get creative with your tweets by adding images, videos, and links to other resources.

4

Follow Others: Unlike other popular social media sites, Twitter allows you to access the posts of others simply by following them. This means you can make connections with people beyond your immediate network, such as with experts in your field and other professionals who you may not otherwise have the chance to get to know. To find people to follow, try using Twellow.com, a webpage that lets you search keywords and categories to find people on Twitter. For example, you can search for "recruiters," or choose an organization name and look for people who work there.

Helpful Resource

Did you ever think that sending a tweet could get you job? For University of Calgary alumni Paul Fairie (@paulisci), it did. After graduating with a PhD in political science, The Globe and Mail spotted some of Paul's tweets about Canadian politics and ended up offering him an opportunity to write for them because of it. Other successful tweeters you might want to follow include next generation career experts Lindsey Pollak (@lindseypollak), Alexandra Levit (@alevit), and Jacquelyn Smith (@jacquelynvsmith).

5 **Start Conversations:** Interacting with others by replying to and retweeting their content is a great way to start networking. When retweeting, be sure to add personal comments to make it your own and start a dialogue. Even if someone has posted something that was not sent to you directly, feel free to reply with your opinion or thank the person for the information. This gives you endless opportunities to connect with people of interest, such as hiring managers or recruiters in your target industry.

6 **Search for Jobs:** Once you've established a network of followers, you might consider leveraging your Twitter connections to find jobs in your field by tweeting about your job search. Write tweets about this from time to time as you gain more followers and receive updates on your progress.

7 **Use Hashtags (#):** Mark keywords or topics in your tweets so that people beyond your immediate network can easily find you. Using hashtags to highlight a particular industry or organization will increase your chances of being seen by the right people. This can be especially important when looking for advice or for a job.

8 **Use the Search Tool:** Just as you can use hashtags to catch the attention of others, the search tool allows you to search keywords. For example, searching for "job postings" and "employment," or more specifically "web design jobs" and "marketing internships" gives you access to all of the tweets where these words or phrases have been mentioned. Once you find a tweet that interests you, craft a meaningful response and start a conversation.

Tip for Success

Popular Hashtags used by graduate students:

#WithAPhD: a twice-monthly open twitter chat for graduate students and academics

#GradChat: graduate student discussions

#HigherEd: discussions about higher education

#Academia: anything related to the academic world

#PhDChat: connects PhD students, professors, and anyone interested in PhD life through a weekly chat

#PhDAdvice: curated discussions and conversations among PhD students

#PhDForum: discussions for PhD students and anyone interested in PhD studies

#ScholarSunday: recommendations for scholars of research, Twitter pages, and everything in between

Other Social Media Outlets

Although LinkedIn and Twitter are the more common social media platforms to develop and enhance your professional presence, there are other ways to get creative and get noticed online. Here are a few other social media outlets you may want to look into and some suggestions for how you can use them in both your job search and in your networking.

Instagram

Are you pursuing work in a creative field? Instagram allows its users to display design projects, artwork, and hands-on skills.

Facebook

Employers often use Facebook to represent their brand and post job opportunities that become available.

WordPress/Blogger

Using online blogs such as WordPress or Blogger allow you to showcase written content and get noticed.

Pinterest

Pinterest is a great place to showcase your skills if you're in a visual field such as art or design.

Workshops and Events

Social Media and the Job Seeker: Tips and Strategies to Give You the Cutting Edge

This workshop designed by the Graduate Students' Association will teach you the importance of being involved in social media, what recruiters are looking for, and how to ensure your best profile is being seen. Learn about a variety of social media platforms that businesses prefer to research in the recruiting process and how you can build a professional online profile that will benefit your job search.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Creating an ePortfolio

In your graduate training you have probably completed numerous projects, papers, and other assignments as part of your degree requirements. Although your work is often worth sharing or saving, it can sometimes be hard to make it available to others. An ePortfolio is an easily accessible digital selection of pieces of your work that you choose to showcase online. Not unlike the information you include on your resume or CV, an ePortfolio is a way for you to "show" rather than just "tell" your work to potential employers. The artifacts that you include in your ePortfolio can be used as examples to demonstrate your competencies and skills by making the process of your learning visible to others.

The Purpose of an ePortfolio

An ePortfolio can serve many purposes and is used both within and outside of academia. Before getting started, you'll want to consider whom your audience is and what you're trying to communicate to them. Here are just a few ways that you might consider using your own ePortfolio:

REFLECTION
Provides a means for capturing perceptions of, and reflections on, your personal learning experience, serving as a planning tool for future learning

DOCUMENTATION
Provides long-term storage for the collections of your work so that you can collect, save, and organize artifacts from your experience

DEMONSTRATION
Showcases your work and skills in order to highlight the quality of your work to potential employers and demonstrate your competencies

Tip for Success

You might want to have multiple ePortfolios, each serving a different purpose or audience. For example, you could have an academic portfolio, a professional or career portfolio, and a teaching portfolio. Just like your resume or CV, it's important to tailor your portfolio to your audience. You can also think of your LinkedIn page as a type of ePortfolio or platform to showcase your work.

What goes into an ePortfolio?

The purpose of your ePortfolio will, in part, determine what you include. These digital spaces are highly customizable and because the ePortfolio has been designed with your unique purpose in mind, there are no rules about what you can or cannot feature. Here are a few things you might want to put in your ePortfolio:

- Contact information
- Curriculum vitae or resume
- Academic transcripts
- Scholarships, certificates, and awards
- Videos of presentations
- Writing assignments and publications

- Podcasts
- Teaching philosophy statement
- Personal career goals and timelines
- Discussion group postings
- Websites or links to other content

- Reflections of previous projects, work experiences, or learning activities
- Artifacts of group projects
- Presentations you have created
- Photographs from events or conferences

- A list of references or letters of recommendation
- Blog entries
- Writing samples
- Feedback from instructors or employers
- Evaluations or assessments

How can an ePortfolio be used?

In graduate school, the focus of your work is often on the final product or outcome. However, when this is translated to the workforce, employers are more often concerned with the process that you went through to come to a certain conclusion. Using an ePortfolio can be a great way to develop an ability to think in this way. Rather than a simple collection of your work, keeping an ePortfolio is an opportunity for you to critically assess your work, reflect on what you've done, and make connections between your different experiences, just like an employer would expect you to do.

An ePortfolio is also a way to demonstrate your competencies, and requires you to explore the types of artifacts that best represent your skills and capabilities. This can help get you thinking about the experiences or projects that best showcase what you can offer an employer, and also serves as evidence of your development in the same way that you would have to do in a job interview.

Helpful Resource

Interested in creating your own ePortfolio? Visit the UCalgary ePortfolio[40] webpage to get started on your own unique and personalized site and view the ePortfolios of your colleagues. The UCalgary ePortfolio provides you with a digital space for reflecting, documenting, representing, collaborating, and sharing your work or experiences. You decide what you want to share in a digital repertoire that you can maintain even after you graduate.

Internship Opportunities

Do you ever wonder how you'll use your graduate degree once you finish school? An internship during your graduate program can help you discover your options while also enhancing your skills. Not only will this experience give you the opportunity to practice and develop the skills you're already learning as a graduate student, but it can also give you a realistic preview of the challenges and opportunities associated with employment. Internships are one way for you to gain work experience under the guidance of an experienced professional, and the university has made it so that you can gain this experience while finishing your program.

Benefits of internships include[41]:

- Practical experience
- Applied learning
- Skill and professional development
- Networking opportunities
- Career exploration

- An edge in the job market
- Enhanced transition into the workplace
- Future career success
- Personal growth
- Awareness of self

Whether you're interested in finding work in academia or outside academia, an internship will give you unique experiential learning opportunities to enhance your employability upon graduating. The University of Calgary offers a number of internship opportunities to graduate students, including:

Transformative Talent Internship[42] – Skills Based

Being a student doesn't mean always having to be in a classroom. Work towards your graduate degree while completing the Transformative Talent Internship, paid work opportunities made possible through the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and funding from the Province of Alberta. These flexible, paid internships allow you to work either full-time or part-time and last up to 12 months. Further develop skills related to your program and your career, and experience what it's like to go through the job search process by finding your own, unique internship opportunity.

| Find and apply for an internship in an area where you would like to further develop your transferable skills | Work either part time or full time with the option of pausing your graduate training during your internship | Receive supplementary scholarship from the University of Calgary through your work term |
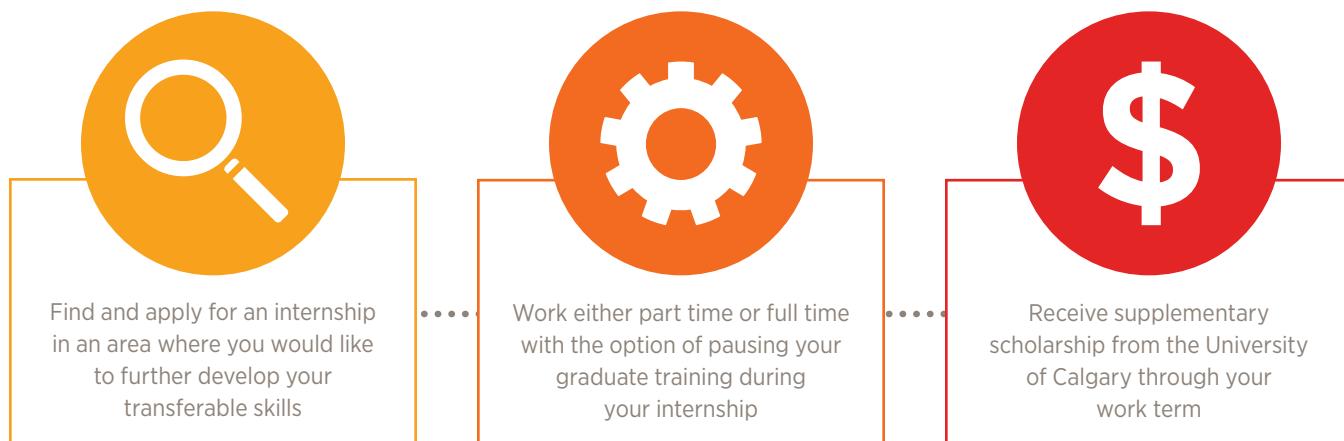
For more information about the Transformative Talent Internship
contact gradintern@ucalgary.ca or visit ucalgary.ca/mygradskills/internships

Mitacs Accelerate Internship[43] – Research Based

Mitacs is a national non-profit program that supports innovation through research collaboration between students and Canadian businesses. The largest provider of internships, Mitacs serves as a platform for your research or thesis/dissertation project by connecting you with private sector partners to work on open projects related to your research over a minimum 4-month paid term. Whether you find an organization looking for interns through the Mitacs website or develop your own workplace connection, the Accelerate Internship has been designed specifically for graduate students like you to help expand your research experience in a non-academic environment.

Why do a Mitacs Accelerate Internship?

• Benefit from the insight and expertise of a faculty supervisor and your organization partner(s)

• Get paid to do research related to your academic interests or thesis/dissertation project

• Expand your resume or CV with research that has been peer-reviewed

Mitacs Accelerate

Did you know?
1 in 4 participating businesses hire **at least one** of their interns into newly created positions after they finish school.
– Mitacs Annual Report[44]

Helpful Resource

Mitacs offers various workshops to students both in person and online as part of their Step curriculum, designed to help you build your skills in the following four areas:

• Leadership & Management

• Communication & Relationship Building

• Personal & Professional Management

• Entrepreneurialism

Choose from and register for over 15 sessions on the Mitacs Step Workshops page[45] to start working towards your career success and building your professional competencies.

The Entrepreneurial Mindset

You don't have to be an entrepreneur to think like an entrepreneur. Developing a strong entrepreneurial mindset is something you've been doing throughout your graduate training, and is useful in most occupations. Even if you're not building a business, you may be part of an organization that is growing and changing, in which case being able to think like an entrepreneur will be a valuable asset. As a graduate student, you already possess some of the most integral skills and competencies of entrepreneurs, including:

INNOVATION
You've developed a critical eye that opens you up to new ideas

CREATIVITY
You instinctively notice new and unique ways of addressing needs in your field of study

POSITIVE ATTITUDE
You're able to envision success and achieve goals, even in the face of challenges

PROBLEM SOLVING
You regularly notice opportunities for growth and change

PERSEVERANCE
You see projects and assignments through to completion and submit high quality work

ACTION ORIENTED
You're driven to accomplish goals through concrete action and have a desire for results

Think about the process you're going through to pursue your research. Attributes that may seem second nature to you, such as curiosity, critical thinking, and self-motivation, are all qualities of entrepreneurs and people with an entrepreneurial mindset. The problem-solving skills, self-awareness, and resilience needed to pursue your research question aren't all that different from building a business! If you already have an entrepreneurial idea or product you want to develop, check out some of the opportunities on the following pages to test it out.

Workshops and Events

Discovering the Entrepreneur Within

Take part in this full-day workshop hosted by Mitacs to learn what it takes for an entrepreneur to reach their goals. Find out about the current Canadian landscape of entrepreneurialism and take away key resources to start your own business. You'll also have the chance to put your ideas to the test by creating a team-based product or concept to present at the end of the workshop.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Entrepreneurial Opportunities

The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Calgary, which means that there are an abundance of opportunities for you to get involved in the world of entrepreneurship. From attending networking events to launching your own startup, it's easy for you to get started on developing your entrepreneurial mindset.

Entrepreneurship Courses for Non-Business Graduate Students[46]

Not a business student but have an innovative idea? To equip graduate students with basic knowledge and skills to support innovation, the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation has partnered with the Haskayne School of Business to offer graduate students in any field access to courses in entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship 781:
An Introduction to Entrepreneurship

This experience-based course, designed for those with no formal training in business, teaches students the prestart-up stage of business development and is designed to build skills in creativity, idea generation, and feasibility analysis.

Entrepreneurship 785:
New Venture Development

In this course, students will work as interdisciplinary teams to develop new ventures that have been funded by the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

Workshops and Events

Wayne Henuset Entrepreneurship Speaker Series[47]

This ongoing interactive series showcases some of Calgary's entrepreneurial leaders and provides students the opportunity to expand their network, address real-life entrepreneurial challenges, and learn from the personal experiences of business innovators.

Pitch Coaching Workshop[48]

Delivered through a mix of traditional classroom lecture and hands-on practice, this presentation will provide you with an interactive and information packed experience. Receive meaningful and valuable feedback by making and practicing your pitches in the workshop.

Startups 101[49]

For aspiring entrepreneurs looking to build their own startup, this daylong workshop will introduce you to the organizations and resources that exist to support Alberta's entrepreneurs, as well as core skills that will help you succeed along your path to entrepreneurial success.

Innovator's Toolkit Series[50]

A six part series for technology entrepreneurs hosted by successful entrepreneurs, executives, and mentors that includes workshops from uncovering financing options to capturing your market. Engaging in the series will also provide you access to a program of continued coaching and mentoring.

Global Entrepreneurship Week Canada[51]

Be part of the largest celebration of innovators and job creators who bring ideas to life. During one week each year, this initiative inspires people everywhere through local, national, and global activities designed to help you explore your potential as a self-starter and innovator.

Entrepreneurship 101[52]

Aimed at technology entrepreneurs and social innovators, Entrepreneurship 101 is Canada's largest live and online entrepreneurship course. Cover the fundamentals of starting and building a new venture by live streaming lectures.

Have an entrepreneurial idea? Test it out!

Summer Incubator Program[53]

Spend your summer building your business through the summer incubator program, an opportunity to get access to co-working spaces, mentorship, and peer support to help launch and grow your startup.

Spin Master Innovation Fund[55]

The next generation of Canadian entrepreneurs is invited to build their ideas through financing, mentoring, and exclusive skill-building opportunities offered through Spin Master Corporation and Futurepreneur Canada.

Energy New Venture Competition[54]

Open to all new innovators, students, and researchers, this competition focused on energy sector entrepreneurs is a platform for advancing emerging energy technology companies and concepts to the next level.

Innovate Calgary[56]

Whether you're starting your own company, looking to disclose an invention, or interested in finding a mentor, Innovate Calgary works to bridge the gap between discovery and innovation.

Community Resources and Supports

Futurepreneur Canada[57]

An organization that helps aspiring entrepreneurs and business owners aged 18-39 launch successful business across Canada by providing financing, resources, and mentoring for your startup.

Startup Calgary[59]

Connects entrepreneurs through various activities and events including access to a startup directory, monthly networking events, weekend conferences, and expert workshop series.

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs[58]

A non-profit organization that provides tools and resources to help women across the province build successful businesses through access to startup capital, entrepreneur training and workshops, business advice, service provider referrals, and partnership/mentorship opportunities.

Chic Geek[60]

A Calgary-based non-profit that supports women entrepreneurs in technology. Become involved in mentorship opportunities, MEETnGEEK community gatherings, beginner-friendly workshops, and the geeky summit, a hands-on learning opportunity to celebrate women in entrepreneurship.

Helpful Resource

Complete an online entrepreneurial potential self-assessment with the Business Development Bank of Canada[61] to measure your entrepreneurial potential and develop a better understanding of your entrepreneurial motivations, aptitudes, and attitudes.

Mentorship and Other Networks

AlbertaIN[62]

A great networking tool for budding entrepreneurs, this community driven online directory represents all of Alberta's innovation sector service providers. Explore the directory based on business phase, services provided, or industry and connect with entrepreneurs in your area.

Entrepeer Hub[63]

Join the Entrepeer Hub group on LinkedIn to gain access to experienced business owners, mentors, and volunteer experts with specialized business skills. Ask questions and participate in discussions with other new and experienced entrepreneurs.

Venture Mentoring Services[64]

A new program powered by Innovate Calgary to provide mentoring to entrepreneurs throughout Alberta. This program provides a safe environment to connect with mentors who have no conflict of interest or financial stake in your business.

PeerSpark Program[65]

Offered through Alberta Women Entrepreneurs, the PeerSpark program provides support and guidance from successful entrepreneurs to women who have a desire to grow their own business.

Tip for Success

Mentorship is often referred to as the "secret weapon" of new entrepreneurs. A mentor should be someone that you trust, but preferably doesn't have a personal connection to or investment in your business. Mentorship will provide you with valuable business advice and enhance your business network, but it will ultimately increase your chances of success. A good mentor should be action oriented, have experience and success as an entrepreneur, and keep your best interest in mind.

Before seeking out a mentor, start a list of your own expectations from a mentorship relationship. Once you have a clear idea of your goals, think about whom might be a good fit. Explore some of the options listed here, or reach out to people in your social network or relevant community groups and associations. Set up meetings with potential mentors like you would an information interview to discuss your possible mentoring relationship.

Helpful Resource

Regardless of whether you plan on being an entrepreneur, having a mentor can help you work towards your career goals. As a graduate student at the University of Calgary, you have access to the free Mentorship Program[66] offered through the **Graduate Students' Association.** Whether you want a career in academia or in a non-academic sector, this program pairs you with a professional mentor in your field of interest that can help you with your personal and professional development.

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Notes

The career
development process
Get Focused

In this chapter you will:

- Complete a career decision making matrix

- Begin the career planning and career goal setting process

- Learn about applying to both academic and non-academic careers

- Develop an effective cover letter and resume or curriculum vitae

Now that you've taken the time to explore career options of interest to you, you'll want to start tailoring your professional documents to those jobs you've identified as being a good fit. This includes **writing a convincing cover letter, crafting a resume or curriculum vitae, and finding strong references.** When you're applying for jobs, the hiring manager may only have a few moments to review your application. This means that you'll need to stand out from other potential employees to get noticed.

While you're not yet applying for jobs, you'll want to prepare and update these documents throughout your graduate training as you gain experience. **This chapter has been divided into two sections: one for the academic job search, and one for the non-academic or alternative academic job search.** While many of the skills you use to write successful job applications are the same in both paths, the actual process will vary. By applying what you learn in this chapter to your own job search, you'll maximize your career success.

Chapter Snapshot

Resume vs. Academic Curriculum Vitae
they *are* different!

Preparing a resume for jobs outside academia is very different from writing your academic curriculum vitae. These documents represent distinct forms of self-representation both in terms of content and format. Outlined below is a direct comparison of the resume, CV, and cover letter.

	Resume	Academic CV	Cover Letter
Purpose What does it do?	Provides a snapshot of you as a professional by highlighting skills developed during your previous experience (i.e., your graduate degree) relevant to a particular position	Provides a comprehensive and exhaustive list of your entire career or "course of life" as a scholar	Highlights relevant experiences and skills from your resume or CV that show your fit for the job and/or organization
Audience Who is reading it?	Labour market employers	Fellow academics or researchers	Same audience as your resume or CV (the cover letter is often read first)
Applicability When should I use it?	When applying for positions outside of academia (i.e., non-profit, government, alternative academic)	When applying for scholarships and awards, graduate programs, research opportunities, teaching positions, and fellowships	Always include a cover letter when applying for positions within and outside of academia, unless otherwise stated
Content What information is included?	Summary of experiences and skills (either occupational or academic) most pertinent to the position	Full list of professional and educational history	Relevant skills and experiences that are substantiated with concrete examples and information about why you are interested in or a good fit for the job
Focus What experiences are most relevant?	Career experiences (i.e., job-related, extracurricular, volunteer) and skills you've developed as a result	Academic achievements and scholarly potential	Those experiences, skills, or qualifications that most strongly align with the needs of the organization
Emphasis How should I talk about my previous experience?	**How** you contribute (i.e., skills and process with a focus on job relevance)	**What** you contribute (i.e., knowledge and productivity with a focus on accumulation)	Speak to the **employer** (i.e., why you're interested in working for them and how your skills will help them)
Length How many pages is it?	Typically 1-2 pages	No limit (tends to be at least 4 pages for early career scholars and 50+ pages for accomplished scholars)	Maximum 1 page
References Are references included?	Not listed	Listed at the end of the document	Not listed, thought it's customary to mention the names of people who recommended you apply

Applying for Non-Academic Jobs
writing a non-academic cover letter

Your cover letter is the place to show your interest in, knowledge about, and fit for a position. In this **single page document,** you'll connect the dots between points in your resume to clarify why your skills and experiences make you an ideal candidate. **If your resume were a movie, your cover letter would be the preview or trailer for it.** When the employer doesn't require a cover letter but you're sending in your resume as an email attachment, think of the body of the email message as your cover letter.

Unlike an application to an academic job, you won't include specific information about your research or academic projects. Rather, **your cover letter will highlight more generally the skills that you've developed as a result of your previous experiences** (both within and outside of graduate school). Not only does a cover letter let you demonstrate these abilities, but it's also a great place to showcase your communication skills. Following the format below will help you structure your cover letter in a way that addresses all of the important points that a hiring manager or potential employer is looking for.

1   **Why are you writing the letter?**
State the name of the job you're applying for, your professional designation or degree name, and how you heard about the opportunity. To make a great first impression, explain why you're interested in the position and show some knowledge about the organization.

2   **Why should they hire you?**
Demonstrate your skills and abilities by highlighting how your qualifications match the needs of the employer. Identify requirements for the desired position and provide examples from your work, research, or teaching experience/training as evidence of your competence and fit.

3   **Why do you want to work for them?**
Do your research on the organization and become familiar with their values, mission, and aims. Communicate why you chose them over any other organization and clearly state in what ways you can add to the organization through your own unique experiences and skill set.

4   **How can you be reached?**
Briefly summarize why you want to work for them and how you can be contacted for an interview or additional information. Provide the reader with your professional email address and phone number and express your interest in further discussing the position with the employer.

Helpful Resource

Drop-in to **Career Services** on Wednesdays between 11am and 1pm during the Fall and Winter semesters to have your resume or cover letter reviewed by a member of their Career Team. You can also submit an **eResume** or cover letter online for paperless proofing.

Non-Academic Cover Letter Sample

A

Address the hiring manager by name. This information can be found on the organization's website or you can call reception to ask. Otherwise, use the salutation, "Dear Hiring Manager".

B

Cite previous conversations with mutual contacts or organization employees. This can include naming the person who referred you to the position if relevant.

C

Always include your signature as part of the closing of your cover letter.

Michael Pradhan

123 University Drive NW Calgary, AB T2N 2N2 | 403-555-1221 | mpradhan@ucalgary.ca

September 16, 2016

Michelle McDavid
University of Calgary Wellness Centre
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB T2N 1N4

Dear Ms. McDavid, ⟶•**A**

RE: Provisional Psychologist Position, Wellness Centre, Job ID #5859

Please accept my application for the provisional psychologist position available through the Wellness Centre. I was referred to this position by my former practicum supervisor and manager of health outreach and promotion at the university, Dr. Kathy Smith. As a counselling psychology graduate from the Master of Science program at the University of Calgary, my academic and professional history has been oriented towards enhancing mental health and well being through counselling relationships. I am confident that my experience working with student populations and passion for this field will make me a strong candidate for the position.

Given my interest and dedication to working with higher learners, my previous two practicum positions were completed in university settings. In these roles, the foundation of counselling skills that were cultivated promote my ability to provide support to students who present with a range of career, academic, and personal concerns. My ability to create strong collaborative relationships with both undergraduate and graduate students in post-secondary has been ⟶•**B** demonstrated through my experience as a mentor through the University of Calgary and the Canadian Psychological Association. As an advocate for the healthy campus initiative, my role in these positions involved assuming a social justice stance and proactively advocating for the increased availability of mental health resource on campuses, which led to the development of a campus-wide community strategy for mental health.

My passion for counselling is rooted in a strengths-based, holistic approach that closely aligns with the mission of your organization to support student health in the areas of mind, body, and spirit. As a recent graduate of the University of Calgary, my comprehensive knowledge about the mental health needs of this population and will allow me to connect with and support your clients in a meaningful way. As an alumnus of this institution, my commitment to giving back to the community and eagerness to continue developing the well being of our campus will be visible in my work as a provisional psychologist with the Wellness Centre.

It is my desire through this provisional placement to enhance both the academic and personal well being of higher learners at the University of Calgary, and in doing so, continue to develop my knowledge and skills as a practicing counsellor. I look forward to discussing this position and my qualifications with you in further detail. Please feel free to contact me by telephone: 403-555-1221 or email: mpradhan@ucalgary.ca at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Michael Pradhan ⟶•**C**

Michael Pradhan

Tip for Success

Use consistent formatting: Ensure the font size and style is the same in your cover letter as it is in your resume. For readability, use a Sans Serif font like Calibri and text no smaller than 11-12 point.

Speak their language: Research the organization and use language that reflects how they describe themselves and their mission. Use the job posting as another source of information.

Stay away from "I" statements: Although you're speaking to your qualifications, you want the cover letter to be about how you meet the employer's needs, not your own.

Building Your Resume

Resume writing is a constructive process, where you create or construct a document based on the values or desires of a potential employer. While you've likely written a CV as part of a scholarship or graduate program application, you may not have had to write a resume before. When applying for jobs outside of academia, resumes are the typical format. While you'll likely use some of the same information from your CV, the way that you present yourself is much different.

Organizing Your Headings

Even something as simple as the order you present information on your resume can be important to an employer. It is common practice to **order the sections of your resume based on their relevance to the job or job posting**. This means that you likely won't list your academic training first, but rather your **related employment experience**. While your graduate training is important and should appear on your resume, be sure to focus on what it is from your experience that will help you get the job (i.e., your transferable skills).

You can also customize the heading titles that you use to further tailor your resume. Given that most recruiters will only take a few moments to review your resume, the more easily accessible the information, the better. For a list of possible heading titles see page 78.

> **Did you know?**
> Recruiters spend an average of **6 seconds** reading your resume before deciding if you'll be a good candidate for the position.
> – The Ladders[1]

Using Action Words

The first word (i.e., the action verb) of each bullet in your resume should add something to what you're saying by setting the tone for the rest of the point. Use the job posting or organization's website to help you identify relevant skills and qualities that the employer is looking for in an applicant. See below for an example of how using key words can emphasize different skills for the same experience:

Example 1:

Created *a novel assessment tool as part of a team that has been used in four post-secondary institutions throughout North America to determine the success of a new training methodology.*

Example 2:

Collaborated *with a multidisciplinary team of graduate students and academic professionals in the development of an assessment tool used to measure training outcomes.*

While both of these points speak to the same experience, each emphasizes different skills or qualities that the student used to accomplish the task. In the first example, emphasis is placed on **creating** skills and the process of **developing** a new tool using this technology. In the second example, **teamwork** and **collaboration** have been emphasized such that the **team** itself becomes the focus on the statement. For a list of action verbs that you can use to tailor your resume, see pages 86–88.

Showcase your Skills

As a graduate student, you may not have any previous paid employment to speak of on your resume. Fortunately, you probably have more relevant experience than you think. The things you've learned through academia and any other positions you may have held (e.g. volunteer positions, club memberships, or committee service) have likely helped you develop skills and capabilities transferable to the workplace, even if these positions weren't paid. **Rather than think of your resume as a place to showcase your employment, think of it as a place to showcase your skills**. Don't hesitate to include a volunteer position and even your thesis project on your resume, as these likely highlight skills you have that will be relevant to the job.

Writing Accomplishment Statements

Accomplishment statements highlight what you've **accomplished** or **achieved** in a particular position. Using accomplishment statements to craft the bullet points in your resume is an important strategy to emphasize not only your experiences, but also your skills, personal qualities, and what you can provide a potential employer.

Rather than simply stating your job duties and tasks, writing accomplishment statements allows you to make your point more impactful by highlighting what you've gained from previous experiences. By following this equation, your resume will be more interesting, more readable, and more successful!

Powerful Action Verb + **What You Did and How** = **Result, Outcome, or Purpose**

When writing accomplishment statements

- Identify the skills you need to demonstrate for the job you're applying to

- Think about a time in the past when you've been required to use or develop those skills

- Highlight the results of your actions by noting what goal was accomplished and quantify this where possible to substantiate and add impact to your statement

Sample accomplishment statement

Original

Designed PhD research project and completed the project from inception to completion.

Revised

Designed a multistage research project requiring detailed data analysis and extensive field sampling which led to a successful grant application of $60,000.

Give it a try!
writing accomplishment statements

Write your own accomplishment statement by following the template below.
Remember that each bullet point listed for a given position should follow this format.

Write Your Own Accomplishment Statement	
Choose a project or job	
What skills do you want to highlight?	
What did you do and how?	
What was the result, outcome, or purpose?	
Your accomplishment statement:	
Powerful Action Verb* **+** **What You Did and How** **=** **Result, Outcome, or Purpose**	

*For a list of action verbs that you can use when writing accomplishment statements, see pages 86-88.

Tip For Success

When writing your resume always focus on how your skills and abilities, not your previous job titles, correspond to the position. Even if your previous experience in academia or the workforce doesn't directly relate to the job for which you're applying, the skills you developed might. Think about your graduate training or volunteer experience as a job (i.e., your teaching, research, writing, editing, and advising activities all count as work experience). Even if you didn't get paid, the skills and abilities that you developed may be relevant to the position you're applying for.

Tailoring Your Resume to the Job

By writing a resume customized to the job you're interested in, you're more likely to be viewed as a worthy candidate. Being able to show that you have the skills an employer is looking for will improve your chances of getting an interview. A popular way of finding out what an employer wants from their applicants is to review the online job posting (see pages 34–35 for a list of popular job search engines). However, large portions of available jobs aren't posted online and can be more difficult to find and tailor an application to as a result. In these cases, you can use alternative job search resources, such as those discussed in Chapter Two.

It can be helpful to think of a job posting as the **blueprint to your resume**, which can be used to tailor your resume in a way that highlights your relevant experiences and expertise. When reviewing a job posting, first go through with a highlighter and note key responsibilities and duties. Think about how you've developed these skills in your graduate training or any other previous experience, and how you can show these qualities in your resume. **Pay attention to the language and terms commonly used in the advertisement** and reflect this in your own writing. An example of a resume that has been tailored to this job posting has been provided on the following two pages.

Tips for Success

As a graduate student, you're trained to speak in academic terms. While this is a great skill to have when communicating with experts in your field, someone reviewing your resume may not have this same level of content specific knowledge. Even when you're applying to jobs within academia, **always assume the person reviewing your application is outside of your field.** This means that when you communicate your skills and experience to a potential employer, use plain, non-specialist language and stay away from jargon and acronyms.

Helpful Resource

Wondering how to talk about your academic work in a non-academic environment? Listen in on Melissa Marshall's witty TedTalk **"Talk Nerdy to Me[2],"** as she uncovers the value of using jargon-free language to communicate your skills to professionals outside of academia.

Tailoring Your Resume to the Job

Go through the job posting and highlight key words such as qualifications, skills, and competencies requested from the applicant. Then write your resume with these in mind, making sure to focus on experiences where you have demonstrated these abilities. On the following two pages, a resume tailored to the job posting below has been provided. Points highlighted in yellow show where the resume has been tailored to the posting.

NOW HIRING
Healthcare Equipment Planner

Job Description and Duties

The Healthcare Equipment Planner will work as a member of the Provincial Planning team and will be responsible for maintaining projects and initiatives. They will provide technical expertise along with budgetary management. Through direct interaction with project managers the incumbent will develop technical and functional requirements to effectively satisfy identified needs.

Competencies Required

- Engage in direct interaction with stakeholders to effectively satisfy identified needs
- Responsible for the management of multiple projects and initiatives as assigned
- Work collaboratively with professionals from a range of different disciplines and actively manage these professional relationships
- Strong written communication skills as showcased through technical evaluations

Education and Experience

- Background in Nursing, Respiratory Therapy, Biomedical Technology, or other associated health technologies will be considered
- Minimum of two (2) years' experience in a clinical, technical or planning management role is preferred
- Experience with the management of projects, clinical initiatives or process development and deployment
- Working knowledge of clinical and medical terminology as well as skills in programming software (e.g., Matlab, Python)
- Understanding of ethical conduct for research involving humans

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Workshop and Events

Responding to the Job Posting

The **Graduate Students' Association** has designed this workshop to teach you how to properly read a job posting and structure your resume so that you can respond to it appropriately and increase your chances of getting an interview.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Tailored Resume Sample

Always start your resume by listing 2-4 of your most relevant skills. Support these statements by giving examples of how you demonstrated or developed the skill.

Briefly discuss your education after your skills. For a degree you've not yet finished include your expected completion date.

Organize bullet points from broad to specific. The last bullet point in each section should highlight your relevant accomplishments.

Tailor heading names to skills mentioned in the job posting to make it easier for employers to find this information. Remember you can include a variety of positions in these sections, including work, volunteer, and academic experiences.

Action verbs for previous positions should be written in past tense, whereas action verbs for current positions should be written in present tense.

ALISON ARNOLD   PAGE | 1

Alison Arnold
1510 University Road NW Calgary, AB T2N 1F6 | 403-555-1234 | ajarnold@ucalgary.ca

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Project Management: Two years accumulated experience planning and coordinating a high profile research project that culminated in the production of two international publications

Communication: Ability to communicate ideas and stimulate discussions in large classrooms as a teaching assistant and as an active member of the women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics committee

Teamwork and Leadership: President of the Biomedical Student Society and winner of the 'leadership and engagement' scholarship leading initiatives to promote biomedical research

EDUCATION

MSc Biomedical Technology (2017)
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB
Specialization: biological systems, cell biology

BSc (Honours), Biology (2014)
Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS
Specialization: ecology

TEAM BASED/PROJECT MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

Biomedical Technician Intern   January 2016 – April 2016
Alberta Health Services, Red Deer, AB
- Collaborated with an interdisciplinary team of researchers in the development of a novel technology to enhance the efficiency of molecular measurements
- Corresponded with multiple supervisors and experts in the field to track records as well as to formulate and accurately execute experimental plans
- Disseminated research findings to the biomedical research board of directors and attained recognition by receiving the 'innovation through internship' award

Team Lead, Multi-Site Cell Biology Research Study   April 2014 – May 2016
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB
- Supervised and coordinated a team of academic researchers through the development and execution of a 2-year regional study in the province of Alberta
- Identified a need for biomedical research focused on biological functions at a higher order of complexity and successfully applied for external funding valued at over $60,000

LEADERSHIP/SUPERVISORY EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Science   September 2016 – Present
University of Calgary, Calgary AB
- Manage a classroom of 40 undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory biology course through the planning and teaching of course concepts and deliverables
- Facilitate and guide class discussions as well as provide ongoing feedback through the assessment of learner competencies and by addressing presenting concerns of students

Highlight positions that may not be as relevant to the job, but where you developed valuable skills. For most employers, past work experience is the best way to measure skills.

Write 2-4 bullet points or accomplishment statements for each position you include.

Only include headings relevant to the position. Each resume you write will look different depending on the job.

Set yourself apart from other applicants by mentioning interests that will show your fit with the organization. Be creative! Remember even your interests can highlight key skills and accomplishments.

Write 2-3 key interest areas and be prepared to talk about them if they come up during the interview.

ALISON ARNOLD   PAGE | 2

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Program Coordinator, International Student Services   April 2012 – August 2014
Dalhouise University, Halifax, NS
- Designed three international student programs and arranged a series of outings aimed at connecting international students with Canadian students both on and off campus
- Managed monthly staff meetings to ensure that student needs were met and all program initiatives were being accomplished in a timely manner
- Hosted bi-annual focus group sessions with international students to investigate the effectiveness of and strategies to improve programming on campus

RELEVANT SKILLS

Data analysis: DAMBE, Gegenees, PyMol   Modeling software: StochSS, BioNetGen, SigTran
Programming: Matlab, Python, Linux OS   Documentation: Microsoft Office, Mendeley, LaTeX

TECHNICAL AND RESEARCH REPORTS

- **Arnold. A.**, Smith, K., & Harold, I. (2016). *Medicine for the delivery of better healthcare: From microbiology to the bigger picture.* (Report No. 2241). Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Harold, I., & **Arnold, A.** (2015). *The future of biomedical research in North America* (NIH Publication No. 02-2650). Retrieved from http://www.websitename.com/

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Ethics and Policy in the Biomedical Industry, Society of Toxicology, Toronto, ON (2016)
- Medical Terminology for Non Clinical Staff, Alberta Health Services, Calgary, AB (2015)
- Imaging in Clinical Trails: Investigator Training Biomedical Systems, Halifax, NS (2013) Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, Centre for Health, Ottawa, ON (2013)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- Biomedical Student Society - University of Calgary, President (2015 - 2016)
- Institute of Biomedical Science, Student Member (2014 - Present)
- Women in STEM - University of Calgary, Committee Member (2014 - Present)

CERTIFICATIONS

- St. John's Ambulance First Aid/CPR Level C, Canadian Red Cross (2015)
- WHIMIS and Biosafety Training, Dalhousie University (2014)

INTERESTS

- **Volleyball**: compete through the University of Calgary's women's athletics club, leading the team to a national championship the past two years
- **3D Design**: create kinetic art for display at the Kintex Fitness and Wellness Centre and placed third in Canada's National Design Competition in 2015

Helpful Resource

Register for a **Versatile PhD**[3] account using your University of Calgary username and password to gain access to authentic resumes and cover letters that got real graduate students their first jobs outside of academia. The website also provides a detailed analysis that describes how graduates made the transition out of academia and shows the application and hiring process step-by-step.

ALIS also offers a **Resume Master**[4] where you can keep track of all your experience, qualifications, skills, and accomplishments. Think of it as a master document where you can pick and choose relevant information as you tailor your resume for different employers.

Sample Resume Section Headings

Skills

- Relevant Skills
- Summary of Skills
- Profile
- Key Strengths
- Highlights of Qualifications
- Professional Highlights
- Accomplishments
- Competencies

Education

- Academic Background
- Academic Training
- Educational Background
- Education History
- Educational Preparation
- Educational Highlights

Education Subheadings

- Additional Education
- Awards and Scholarships
- Honours and Distinctions
- Professional Education
- Related Courses
- Related Projects
- Special Recognition
- Special Honours
- Thesis/Dissertation Title

Experience

- Employment Listing
- Employment Chronology
- Experience Summary
- Employment Record
- Work History
- Job Assignments
- Prior Experience
- Professional Background
- Professional Experience
- Professional Highlights
- Relevant/Related Experience
- Specific Experience

Certifications

- Accreditation

Languages

- Language Competencies
- Language Skills

Memberships/Affiliations

- Associations
- Club Memberships
- Professional Memberships
- Professional Affiliations
- Professional Organizations

Volunteer Work

- Community Service
- Community and Professional Involvement
- Community and Other Activities
- Professional and Community Activities
- Relevant Volunteer Experience
- Volunteer Activities

Professional Development

- Distinctions
- Conferences and Conventions
- Conferences Attended
- Exhibits
- Extracurricular Activities
- Fellowships
- Licenses
- Papers Presented
- Patents
- Publications
- Presentations
- Research Grants
- University Activities

Professional Interests

- Activities and Interests
- Hobbies
- Leisure Activities
- Personal Achievements
- Travel Abroad

Adapted from Career Services, University of Calgary

Resume and Non-Academic Cover Letter Checklist

General Checklist		Notes
Consistent use of a Sans Serif font at 11-12 point		
Margins are set to no less than 1-inch on all sides		
Effective use of spacing between paragraphs, sections, and lines		
Spelling and grammar have been reviewed for professionalism (i.e., do not use abbreviations)		
Contact information is listed at the top of both documents		
Requested page limits have not been exceeded		
Printed on high quality paper or saved as PDF files		
Cover Letter Checklist		**Notes**
Points clearly relate back to the accompanying resume		
Employer's address, date, and subject line are all included		
Letter is addressed to the hiring manager by name		
Job posting name and number is included (if relevant)		
Document is formatted according to the 4-paragraph structure		
Pronouns such as "I" or "me" have not been overused		
Other materials included in your application have been referenced		
Electronic signature included at end of document		
Resume Checklist		**Notes**
Formatting and size of bullet points consistent throughout		
Header on each page lists your name and the page number		
Qualifications section has been tailored to the job posting		
Most relevant information appears on the first page		
Components of each section listed in reverse chronological order		
Each position has approximately 2-4 supporting bullet points		
All bullet points are written as accomplishment statements		
Consistent use of verb tense for past/current positions		

Notes

Applying for Academic Jobs

Academic Cover Letter Template

A
Use university letterhead specific to your department.

B
Mention your research with an emphasis on what will be coming from it going forward.

C
Only provide a name if you're interested to work with this person and are informed about their research.

D
Show how your teaching and research serve to enhance current course offerings and other initiatives.

E
Note any materials included in your application in the closing (e.g., your curriculum vitae).

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

SCHULICH SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING — A

Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 1N4
ucalgary.ca

Date

Search Committee Chair
Department
University
Address
City, Province, Postal Code
Country

Dear Search Committee Members,

Introduction - Start this section by stating the position for which you are applying. Then briefly introduce yourself by providing information about your current position/field of study, the name of your degree granting institution, and your dissertation title along with expected completion date. — B

Dissertation/Thesis - Concisely explain the central topic and main findings of your project. Then discuss the contributions of your work in a broader context (e.g., publications, conferences, grants, teaching opportunities). End this paragraph by gesturing towards the next project (and/or class) that will grow out of your dissertation work.

Future Research - Be specific when discussing plans for the future (e.g., including names of journals to submit your work) to demonstrate your research productivity. Emphasize how your research can further the department and consider suggesting collaborations with other faculty. — C

Teaching and Service to the Department - Include contributions beyond your thesis or dissertation such as teaching, fieldwork, and research initiatives, mention how you might teach required classes and reference your previous work as applicable.

Tailor to the Job Ad - Talk about why you want to work for this specific institution, and make well-researched comments about why this department and/or faculty are a good fit for you. Discuss research, coursework, or other projects you feel you could contribute to this institution. — D

Closing - Include a sign off that expresses your enthusiasm about the prospect of working in the department and to thank the hiring committee for considering your application. Gesture to future conversations by saying you look forward to speaking with them further about this opportunity.

Sincerely,

[Signature] — E
Full name

Tip for Success

Avoid using jargon: Always assume the person reading your cover letter is a non-expert.

Write as a colleague: Think of yourself as a member of the faculty, not a graduate student. This means referring to other members of the department as colleagues not professors and speaking to opportunities to work with them, not for them.

Show, don't tell: Anyone can say they have skills, but it's important to show them. Provide evidence to support your claims by referencing your previous experience.

Academic Curriculum Vitae Template

Always use a Sans Serif font in your CV to enhance the readability. Aside from your name, all text should be in 11-12 point font.

For a degree you haven't finished yet, list your expected date of completion.

Depending on the job, you may or may not want to include bullet points. Check with a trusted advisor about how to structure your CV.

Always list the name of the course (not the course number) when referring to previous teaching experience.

Depending on the number of publications you have, you may want to call this section "Select Publications" and highlight your most relevant work.

Include forthcoming publications in this section by creating separate subheadings for manuscripts in preparation and/or under review.

ELIZABETH ZHANG   PAGE | 1

Elizabeth Zhang
1212 University Gate NW Calgary, AB T2N 4T4 | 403-555-0110 | elizabeth.zhang@ucalgary.ca

EDUCATION

PhD History (2018)
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB
- Dissertation title: (can also include research interests)
- Supervisor: (can also include committee members)

MA History (2014)
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB
- Dissertation title: (can also include research interests)
- Supervisor: (can also include committee members)

BA Cultural Studies (2012)
University of Tokyo, JP
- Specialization: (can also be your major)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, Department of History   2015 - Present
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB
Advanced courses taught: The practice of history; the contemporary world; East Asia from1800

Guest Lecturer, Faculty of Cultural Studies   2014
Red Deer College, Red Deer, AB
Advanced courses taught: Cultural studies historiography; cultural studies theory

RESEARCH AND LABORATORY EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Department of History   2014 - 2015
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB
Project title: A historical analysis of international development in non-Western societies

PUBLICATIONS

Refereed Articles
Zhang, E., Jones, S., & Erikson, D. (in press). The future of history: A study of the next decade. *Journal of Contemporary History, 8,* 17-33.

Davidson, M., & **Zhang, E.** (2015). A brief history of the history profession. *The Historical Journal, 16,* 215-238.

Manuscripts in Preparation
Zhang, E. (2016). Alternative careers for the history major: Moving beyond academia and into the workforce. *The Canadian Journal of History*. Manuscript in preparation.

Tips for Success

As a general rule, **add one line to your CV every one or two months** by staying involved in opportunities to enhance your professional development and contribute to the field. Consider how you might do this through conferences, workshops, publications, grants, volunteering, and other opportunities.

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ELIZABETH ZHANG   PAGE | 2

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

Arthur, A., & **Zhang, E.** (2015, September). *Cultural competence in the history profession: An international investigation.* Paper presented at Asia Pacific History Association Conference. Tokyo, JP.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship, University of Calgary ($10,800)	2016
Graduate Program Engagement Scholarship, University of Calgary ($5,000) – Declined	2016
Graduate Student Scholarship, Alberta Scholarships Program ($7,500)	2015
Department of History Academic Achievement Award, University of Calgary	2014

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

National Humanities Center Research Fellowship, University of Alberta	2015 – 2016
History Council Conference Grant, Canadian Council for the Arts	2015
Special Achievement Grant in Student Journalism, University of Calgary	2014
University Graduate Fellowship in History, University of Calgary	2013 – 2014

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Vice President, History Students' Association   2014 - Present
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/OUTREACH

Guest Lecturer   2015
Alberta Teachers' Association, Vancouver, BC
Title: Integrating history into secondary education: A call for specialization in high school

Executive Board Member   2014 - 2016
Canada's History Advisory Council, Calgary, AB

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS/MEMBERSHIPS

Canadian Historical Association	2015
Alberta Academy of History Professionals	2013
History in the Making Committee	2013

REFERENCES

Full Name, Professional Designation
Job Title
Institution Name
Address
Phone number
Email

</div>

Use a consistent header for cover letters longer than a single page.

Include both awards that you've accepted and declined, as well as the value of the award.

Use white space and consistent spacing throughout. You want your CV to be appealing and accessible to the reader and to flow well.

Always check with a potential referee if they are willing to assume this role. Keep your referees updated on any jobs you've applied for recently.

Right justify all of your dates except in the education section. It is customary to only include the year(s) that you were involved in any given position.

Helpful Resource

Chronicle Vitae[5] is an online hub connecting you with academics locally and internationally as well as with collaborators and mentors in your field. Their online storage system allows you to house your professional documents such as a master copy of your curriculum vitae. You can also check out the **Canadian Common CV[6],** a web-based application that provides researchers with a single, common approach to gathering CV information.

Sample Academic Curriculum Vitae Subheadings

Education

- Comprehensive Areas
- Course Highlights
- Research Interests
- Thesis/Dissertation Title

Teaching Experience

- Classes Taught
- Graduate Advising/Mentoring (e.g., summer students)

Research Experience

- Lab Participation
- Research Assistant
- Research Projects

Publications

- Blogs/Web-Based Publications
- Book Reviews
- Books and Book Chapters
- Conference Proceedings
- Edited Volumes
- Encyclopaedia Entries
- Manuscripts in Preparation
- Manuscripts in Submission
- Referred Journal Articles

Honours and Awards

- Academic Awards
- Distinctions
- Grants
- Fellowships

Professional Affiliations/ Memberships

- Other Affiliations
- Professional Associations

Presentations

- Campus or Departmental Talks
- Conference Presentations
- Invited Talks
- Panels Organized
- Workshops

Service to the Profession

- Committee Work
- Journal Manuscript Review
- Leadership of Professional Groups
- Professional Activities

Extracurricular University Service

- Committee Leadership
- Departmental/Faculty Leadership
- Involvement in Student Groups
- Sporting Clubs

Professional Employment

- Employment History
- Contracted Positions
- Professional Background
- Work Experience

Community Involvement/ Outreach

- Exhibits
- Public Lectures
- Work in Schools

Other

- International Experience
- Languages Spoken
- Media Coverage
- Technical Skills

Helpful Resource

When applying for academic jobs you may also be required to write additional statements as part of your application, such as teaching philosophies and dossiers. For more information about what these documents are and how to write them, visit the **Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning[7],** where you can access resources and attend workshops to help you with the application process.

Academic Curriculum Vitae and Cover Letter Checklists

General Checklist		Notes
Consistent use of a Sans Serif font at 11-12 point		
Margins are set to no less than 1-inch on all sides		
Effective use of spacing between paragraphs, sections, and lines		
Spelling and grammar have been reviewed for professionalism (i.e., do not use abbreviations)		
Contact information is listed at the top of both documents		
Requested page limits have not been exceeded		
Printed on high quality paper or saved as PDF files		
Cover Letter Checklist		**Notes**
Written on university letterhead		
Points clearly relate back to the accompanying CV		
University address, date, and subject line are all included		
Letter is addressed to the search committee members or chair		
Document is formatted according to the 6-paragraph structure with a focus on your future contributions to research and teaching		
Courses taught are listed for all teaching positions		
Members of the department are referred to as colleagues		
Other materials included in your application have been referenced		
Electronic signature included at end of document		
Curriculum Vitae Checklist		**Notes**
Formatting and size of bullet points consistent throughout		
Header on each page lists your name and the page number		
Most relevant information appears first		
Components of each section listed in reverse chronological order		
Courses taught are listed for all teaching positions		
Consistent use of verb tense for past/current positions		
References have been included and referees contacted		

Action Verb List

Administrative/Organizational Skills

- Addressed
- Approved
- Arranged
- Assembled
- Catalogued
- Categorized
- Centralized
- Charted
- Classified
- Coded
- Collaborated
- Collected
- Compiled
- Corrected
- Corresponded
- Dispatched
- Distributed
- Documented
- Entered
- Executed
- Filed
- Generated
- Implemented
- Incorporated
- Input
- Inspected
- Logged
- Maintained
- Memorized
- Monitored
- Obtained
- Operated
- Ordered
- Organized
- Prepared
- Prioritized
- Processed
- Provided
- Purchased
- Recorded
- Registered
- Reserved
- Resolved
- Responded
- Restored
- Retrieved
- Reviewed
- Routed
- Scheduled
- Screened
- Spearheaded
- Specified
- Submitted
- Supplied
- Standardized
- Systematized
- Tabulated
- Transcribed
- Transformed
- Updated
- Validated
- Verified

Creative Skills

- Acted
- Abstracted
- Adapted
- Applied
- Authored
- Began
- Combined
- Composed
- Conceived
- Conceptualized
- Condensed
- Created
- Customized
- Designed
- Developed
- Devised
- Directed
- Displayed
- Entertained
- Established
- Evaluated
- Fashioned
- Formed
- Formulated
- Founded
- Generated
- Illustrated
- Imagined
- Improvised
- Initiated
- Innovated
- Instituted
- Integrated
- Introduced
- Invented
- Marketed
- Modelled
- Modified
- Originated
- Painted
- Performed
- Photographed
- Planned
- Presented
- Problem solved
- Produced
- Refined
- Revised
- Revitalized
- Rewrote
- Shaped
- Sketched
- Solved
- Synthesized
- Updated
- Visualized

Data/Financial Skills

- Administered
- Adjusted
- Aided
- Allocated
- Analyzed
- Appraised
- Assessed
- Audited
- Balanced
- Budgeted
- Calculated
- Compared
- Computed
- Conserved
- Corrected
- Determined
- Developed
- Estimated
- Figured
- Forecasted
- Maintained
- Managed
- Marketed
- Measured
- Netted
- Planned
- Prepared
- Programmed
- Projected
- Qualified
- Reconciled
- Reduced
- Researched
- Retrieved
- Tracked

Helping Skills

- Adapted
- Advised
- Advocated
- Aided
- Answered
- Arbitrated
- Arranged
- Assessed
- Assisted
- Attended
- Brought
- Cared
- Carried out
- Clarified
- Coached
- Collaborated
- Contributed
- Cooperated
- Coordinated
- Counselled
- Delivered
- Demonstrated
- Diagnosed
- Educated
- Empathized
- Encouraged
- Enlisted
- Ensured
- Facilitated
- Fostered
- Furnished
- Furthered
- Guided
- Helped
- Inspired
- Instilled
- Insured
- Intervened
- Maintained
- Mentored
- Modified
- Motivated
- Performed
- Prevented
- Provided
- Referred
- Rehabilitated
- Related
- Represented
- Resolved
- Served
- Simplified
- Supplied
- Supported
- Upheld
- Volunteered

Management/Leadership Skills

- Achieved
- Administered
- Allocated
- Analyzed
- Anticipated
- Applied
- Appointed
- Approved
- Assessed
- Assigned
- Attained
- Authorized
- Chaired
- Conceived
- Considered
- Consolidated
- Consulted
- Contracted
- Controlled
- Converted
- Coordinated
- Delegated
- Determined
- Developed
- Directed
- Eliminated
- Emphasized
- Encouraged
- Enforced
- Enhanced
- Established
- Evaluated
- Executed
- Expanded
- Expedited
- Founded
- Formed
- Generated
- Governed
- Handled
- Headed
- Hired
- Hosted
- Implemented
- Improved
- Incorporated
- Increased
- Initiated
- Inspected
- Instituted
- Launched
- Led
- Managed
- Merged
- Motivated
- Navigated
- Negotiated
- Organized
- Originated
- Outlined
- Overhauled
- Oversaw
- Perceived
- Planned
- Presided
- Prioritized
- Produced
- Recommended
- Reconciled
- Recruited
- Reorganized
- Replaced
- Reported
- Represented
- Resolved
- Restored
- Reviewed
- Scheduled
- Screened
- Secured
- Selected
- Spearheaded
- Sponsored
- Staged
- Streamlined
- Strengthened
- Supervised
- Troubleshot

People/Communication Skills

- Addressed
- Advertised
- Advised
- Aided
- Answered
- Appraised
- Arbitrated
- Arranged
- Articulated
- Authored
- Briefed
- Clarified
- Collaborated
- Communicated
- Composed
- Condensed
- Conducted
- Conferred
- Consulted
- Contacted
- Contributed
- Conveyed
- Convinced
- Cooperated
- Corresponded
- Counselled
- Debated
- Defined
- Demonstrated
- Developed
- Directed
- Discussed
- Drafted
- Edited
- Educated
- Elicited
- Enlisted
- Explained
- Expressed
- Formulated
- Furnished
- Incorporated
- Influenced
- Informed
- Inspired

People/Communication Skills continued

- Interacted
- Interpreted
- Interviewed
- Involved
- Joined
- Judged
- Lectured
- Listened
- Marketed

- Mediated
- Merged
- Moderated
- Motivated
- Negotiated
- Observed
- Outlined
- Participated
- Persuaded

- Presented
- Promoted
- Proposed
- Publicized
- Reconciled
- Recruited
- Referred
- Reinforced
- Reported

- Represented
- Researched
- Resolved
- Responded
- Solicited
- Specified
- Spoke
- Suggested
- Summarized

- Synthesized
- Translated
- Verbalized
- Wrote

Research Skills

- Analyzed
- Calculated
- Catalogued
- Clarified
- Collected
- Computed
- Conceived
- Conducted
- Correlated

- Critiqued
- Delivered
- Detected
- Determined
- Diagnosed
- Discovered
- Evaluated
- Examined
- Experimented

- Explored
- Extracted
- Extrapolated
- Formulated
- Gathered
- Identified
- Inspected
- Interpreted
- Interviewed

- Investigated
- Located
- Measured
- Monitored
- Observed
- Organized
- Proved
- Researched
- Reported

- Reviewed
- Searched
- Solved
- Studied
- Summarized
- Surveyed
- Systematized
- Tested

Teaching/Training Skills

- Adapted
- Advised
- Clarified
- Coached
- Communicated
- Conducted
- Coordinated
- Critiqued

- Defined
- Developed
- Enabled
- Encouraged
- Evaluated
- Explained
- Facilitated
- Focused

- Guided
- Incorporated
- Individualized
- Informed
- Initiated
- Instilled
- Inspired
- Instructed

- Lectured
- Mentored
- Motivated
- Observed
- Persuaded
- Presented
- Set goals
- Simulated

- Stimulated
- Taught
- Tested
- Trained
- Transmitted
- Tutored
- Updated

Technical Skills

- Adapted
- Analyzed
- Applied
- Assembled
- Calculated
- Computed
- Conserved
- Constructed

- Converted
- Debugged
- Designed
- Determined
- Developed
- Devised
- Engineered
- Fabricated

- Fortified
- Inspected
- Installed
- Maintained
- Operated
- Overhauled
- Printed
- Programmed

- Rectified
- Regulated
- Remodelled
- Repaired
- Replaced
- Restored
- Solved
- Specialized

- Standardized
- Studied
- Trained
- Upgraded

Requesting References

Who should you ask to be your reference? This can be a difficult decision when applying for a job, especially one outside of academia. When choosing referees, include the people who know you well enough to answer specific questions about your character, skills, and work ethic. Ultimately, these people are recommending you to an employer, so you want to make sure they can provide strong support for this. Always check that the people listed as your referees are aware of this and know that they can expect to be contacted.

How do I ask?

Remember when making requests for a reference to ask your potential referee whether they feel comfortable providing you with a positive recommendation. Your referee may be the deciding factor in whether you get a job, and so you want to be sure that they sincerely believe you're a valuable worker and will speak highly of you on your behalf. It is also important to identify whether your referee is limited in the type of information that they can disclose to a potential employer. If a referee can only confirm your employment status, they may not be the most helpful source of information.

Who do I ask?

All of your references should be professional, which means that you've worked with them in a professional capacity (e.g., academia, employment, volunteering). **If you're applying for an academic position, your first and second referees should always be from an academic context**. Be sure to list your references from **most relevant to least relevant** to the job for which you're applying. Always request a reference from the most senior person who you worked closely with. You will also want to try and strike a balance between including references from diverse areas, but that are still relevant to the job you're applying for.

What else do I need?

To make the process easier for your referees, **provide them with a copy of your resume or CV in advance** so that they'll be prepared to answer questions when contacted. You'll also want to give them some background information about the position(s) you'll be applying for and why you're interested in getting the job. If you're able to communicate your enthusiasm to your referees, they will likely communicate that same enthusiasm to your potential employer.

Tip For Success

Although most employers only require 3 references, **try to list up to 4** if possible. This way if any of your references are unavailable you have a backup referee just in case. Always contact your referees each time you provide their information to a potential employer so that they will be prepared. Also be sure to thank your references each time that you give their information to a potential employer, even if you're not successful in getting the job.

Formatting References

Unless otherwise stated, it's common practice when applying for non-academic jobs for references to be provided as a separate document rather than as part of your resume. Not only will this save you valuable space on your resume, but it will also give you the chance to tell your referees ahead of time that a potential employer may be contacting them. Your references should be formatted with the word "References" at the top and your name underneath. Always come to an interview with references prepared in case the potential employer requests them. In your curriculum vitae, references will appear at the end of your document on their own page. All of your references should include the following information:

Reference Template
• Name of Reference
• Job Title
• Name of Organization
• Work Phone Number (direct line)
• Email Address
• Type of Referee (employment, academic, character)
• Hours Available
• One sentence about the role of the referee in regards to you

Academic Example
Julian Harbour Associate Professor University of Calgary 403.555.8585 (ext. 588) Academic Reference julharbour@ucalgary.ca (preferred) Hours Available: 9:00am – 12:00pm, Monday to Friday Master's Thesis Supervisor

Employment Example
Angela Agapov Office Manager OL Communications, Inc. 403.555.1277 (preferred) Employment Reference a.agapov@OLcommunications.ca Hours Available: 8:00am – 4:00pm, Monday to Friday Direct Supervisor

References

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   master.html

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   teaching-philosophies-and-dossiersimagine.ucalgary.ca

Notes

The career
development process
Take Action

In this chapter you will:

- Learn how to effectively prepare for an interview to maximize your success in making a good impression

- Practice responding to common interview questions using the SPARC technique

- Learn how to respond to illegal interview questions and ask strong questions of the interviewer

- Develop a template for writing a thank you letter or email to the interviewer

- Explore the process of evaluating and negotiating single or multiple job offers

Now that you've gone through the process of getting to know yourself, exploring your career options, and focusing your job search, it's time to take action. **The final stage of the career development process is interviewing for and negotiating the terms of a job.** As a graduate student, this is likely the stage that you'll be most unfamiliar with as you make your transition from "student" to "worker."

Whether you plan to stay in academia or make the move toward a non-academic career, leaving your status as a graduate student behind can be daunting. While some of these practices may seem foreign, remember that your graduate training has prepared you for many of them. In fact, going through the process of applying for graduate school was probably similar to that of applying for a job. Whether you had to go through an interview process, evaluate different options, or perhaps negotiate with a potential supervisor, you've likely already started to develop many skills you'll need to be successful during the interview process. And with some of the strategies and tools offered in this chapter, this transition can be made even easier.

Chapter Snapshot

Graduate Student Job Search Myths

There are a lot of myths about the job search process. As a graduate student, you may have questions about the transition from school to work. In this section we challenge some common job search myths so that you can get a better idea of what it'll be like to enter the workforce.

Myth: I will be able to find a job right after graduating

Finding a job isn't always easy, even if you're qualified for the work. According to Julie Brown, Graduate Students' Association Employer Liaison, graduates can expect that the average job search will take **several months.** Depending on what field you're in, employers only interview about **2% of applicants** on average[1], and most people can expect to get **one or two offers for every 10 interviews.** With that being said, you can increase your chances of success by being active during your job search. You can't expect a reaction without action, so be sure to keep your job search up, even in the face of rejection.

Myth: If I don't get the job there's something wrong with me

There are many reasons why a potential employer may not choose to hire you for a position that you've interviewed. While your immediate reaction may be to assume that they didn't think you were qualified, this isn't always the case. Given how highly competitive the job market is, it could be that one candidate was simply a better fit. Qualifications aside, **most hiring decisions are made with office dynamics in mind** and things like **organizational culture, fit with existing staff, and personality may all play a role** in hiring decisions. Remember that choosing a candidate is always a business decision and should never be taken personally.

Myth: I'm only qualified for work in my field of study

Being trained as a graduate student means that you have a variety of transferable skills that could be applied to a number of different work environments. Rather than do your search based on job titles and industry names, **think about how your values, interests, skills, and strengths might be a good match for different types of work** both outside of and within your field. To review, refer back to the work you did in Chapter One.

Myth: Increasing the number of jobs I apply to will increase my chances of getting a job

In the job search process, **quality is always better than quantity.** Hiring managers can recognize generic applications. If you aren't taking the extra time and effort to tailor what you're submitting, you likely won't get asked for an interview. This is also true of online applications, which tend to be less personal than other methods of job searching where you can make connections with employers, such as through networking.

Preparing for the Interview

It is normal to feel nervous before going into an interview. However, be confident in the fact that you've already likely succeeded in interview situations before. As a graduate student, you've started to develop interview skills that you'll be able to use in other contexts both within and outside of academia.

One key component of interview anxiety is fear of the unknown. While you may not be able to predict everything that will happen in an interview, you can take steps to **prepare yourself for what might come.** Using the information provided in this section will help you to prepare for the interview and ultimately be more successful in the process.

Presenting Yourself

Part of the interview process that often gets overlooked is your ability to present yourself. While most of the questions you'll be asked will focus on your skills and accomplishments, **your appearance, attitude, and body language also play a role in determining how the employer views you.** Here are just a couple of suggestions from ALIS[2] of ways that you can prepare yourself for the interview:

Dress to Impress

Dressing for the job doesn't always mean dressing up. When you go for an interview you want to look like you're already working for the organization. You might consider stopping by the office or workspace before your interview to get a feel for how other people are dressed. Here are some additional tips for dressing appropriately for a job interview:

When going for a job interview, less is more in most cases. Try to be conservative when choosing your clothes, shoes, jewellery, and perfume/cologne. Avoid bold prints and use discretion with your accessories. Remember that many companies have a scent free policy, so be courteous of this rule.

Being a graduate student, you may be used to carrying a backpack or bag on campus, but this isn't appropriate in the workplace. When showing up to a job interview, always carry your items in a purse or briefcase. It is important that you maintain your professionalism in all areas of your appearance, including your accessories.

Always show up to an interview well groomed. First impressions are made within the first 7 seconds of meeting someone. Before you even have a chance to speak to your skills, you want to make sure that you come looking clean and well kept. This includes ensuring your clothes are in good condition, so avoid anything that looks old or overused.

Appropriate Body Language

Your non-verbal communication often speaks louder than words. Try these techniques to ensure that your body language is saying what you want to communicate:

Sit straight in your chair with your feet flat on the floor and hands in your lap. This shows you're confident yet relaxed. Even if you're not confident in yourself, maintaining this posture will help you feel and communicate that you are. Note that choosing to cross your arms and/or legs can come across as defensive or close-minded.

Make an effort to smile at the interviewer throughout your conversation, especially at the beginning and end. It is important to make direct eye contact with the interviewer when you're speaking. A lack of eye contact can be seen as showing a lack of honesty or confidence.

Shake hands with the interviewer at the beginning and end. Always start the handshake and pair it with a greeting like, "pleased to meet you." This shows you're confident and initiates a bond. If you're unsure about how to shake hands, try to mirror the interviewer. Average handshakes should last no more than 5 seconds or "two shakes."

Helpful Resource

Join social psychologist Amy Cuddy in her popular TedTalk **"Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are[3],"** where she talks about what our body language and non-verbal communication says to people. Learn how something as simple as your posture can communicate confidence and have an impact on your career success.

Building Your Confidence

Showing confidence in an interview will help create the impression that you're qualified and ready to take on the work. If you still feel you might not be ready, here are some useful strategies you can use to help build up your confidence before ever stepping foot in the interview:

Take some time before your interview to visualize being there. Imagine who is in the room, what they are saying, and how you're presenting yourself. Imagine being confident and successful. This will help to reduce fear of the unknown and minimize any negative expectations you have.

Practice answering interview questions out loud to yourself. Hearing your voice will increase comfort with the process and can also help you remember what to say in the interview. You might also try repeating positive affirmations to yourself like "I am prepared" or "I am confident" to improve your attitude.
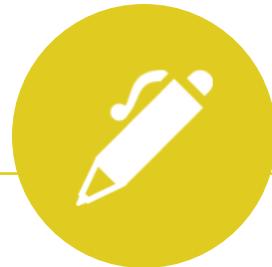
Talking about yourself can be awkward. To plan what you're going to say in the interview, write down what you think are the skills, knowledge, and abilities you can offer. Writing them down and then practicing out loud will help you speak with more confidence during the actual interview.

Tip for Success

Review your resume: The interviewer may use this document to generate specific questions about your previous experiences. Be prepared with a response by familiarizing yourself with your resume.

Look over the job posting again: Review the job description and the types of skills and experiences requested of applicants. Be sure to highlight these during your interview.

Be brief: Brief isn't always bad when answering interview questions. Keeping an answer less than two minutes is usually best as it allows you the time to provide a response without rambling.

Do your research: Research the organization's website and social media pages to develop an understanding of who they serve as well as their mission and purpose. Find ways to bring this into the interview by mentioning how you'll complement these objectives.

Make it personal: Try to use the interviewer's name when speaking to them and, if relevant, refer to their own contributions to the organization that you found interesting or noteworthy.

Phone and Skype Interview Etiquette

With recent advances in technology and job postings receiving more responses than ever, **it's becoming more common for interviews to be done over the phone or via Skype.** While most of the questions you'll get asked during a phone or Skype interview will be the same, the process itself may still feel different than if it were in person. If you've never done an interview like this before, you might have some questions about what to expect. Even though many of the same rules of an in person interview apply to phone and Skype interviews, there are some unique things to consider. These tips will help you ace an interview that isn't face-to-face:

Phone Interview Tips

Answer the first time: It may seem obvious, but be sure that you answer the phone the first time they call. Playing phone tag during an interview comes off as unprofessional. Also make sure if you live with roommates to let them know you're expecting a call and to let you answer the phone.

Speak up: In a phone interview you don't have the typical non-verbal cues to rely on. This means it's even more important to use your words to express yourself. For example, if you need a moment to think of your response, make sure you say this out loud rather than wait in silence. Smiling when you talk can also help you to sound more enthusiastic.

Turn off call waiting: Having another call come in while in an interview can be distracting and may cause you to miss parts of the conversation. Turn off this feature so that you can give your full attention to the interview.

Avoid speakerphone: Using speaker can take away from the clarity of your voice and can make it more difficult for the interviewer to hear you.

Skype Interview Tips

Look into the camera: It can be tempting to look at either yourself or the interviewer on the computer screen. However, from the other person's point of view, this can look like you're diverting your gaze. Focus on the camera when you talk so the interviewer feels you're addressing them.

Minimize distractions: For both yourself and the interviewer, distractions become even more noticeable over Skype. Be aware of what's in the background and ensure your space is clean. If you're doing the interview around other people, let them know not to disturb you during this time.

Dress appropriately: You might be able to get away with wearing sweats to an interview over Skype, but it's best not to. Dressing as if you were going to the interview will help you feel and appear more confident.

Do a test run: Skype lets you make test calls so you can double-check your audio and visual. Make sure everything is running smoothly before the interview, as technical difficulties may reflect poorly on you.

Interview Questions

Non-Academic Positions

There are a few different types of questions that you'll likely be asked during a typical interview. Outlined below is a list of the most common styles of interview questions and tips on the best way to approach some of the more difficult questions you might get asked. Keep in mind that **there is more than one right way to answer an interview question.** By using these strategies you'll be able to craft an answer that is not only authentic, but also meaningful to the employer, and in doing so increase your chances of getting the job.

Non-Direct Questions:
General inquiries that do not ask for specific information

- Tell me about yourself.

- Why should we hire you?

- What key skills would you bring to this job?

- What attracted you to this job?

- What do you see as your greatest strengths?

- What do you consider your major weaknesses and how do they affect your performance?

- What do you expect to be doing in five years?

Non-Direct Question Example

Tell me about yourself.

How to Approach it:

One of the most difficult questions to answer during an interview is "tell me about yourself." Employers know this is an ambiguous question and ask it to get a better understanding of how you deal with uncertainty and of your communication skills. An ALIS report[4] suggests responding to the question as if the interviewer had asked, **"How would you describe your background and how has it prepared you for this job?"** as this is what the employer really wants to know.

Non-Direct Question Example

What do you consider your major weaknesses and how do they affect your performance?

How to Approach it:

Talking about your weaknesses can be tricky during a job interview because you don't want to raise any red flags. Many people make the mistake of picking a weakness that is actually a positive, such as "I'm a perfectionist." While it's tempting to answer in this way, it doesn't really answer the question. If you really want to impress the interviewer, describe a weakness but **follow it up by stating how you plan to improve or how you're working on it.** This way, even though you're talking about something that might be negative, you're also showing the employer that you're willing to learn, grow, and take initiative to improve.

Direct Questions:
Guided inquiries that predetermine the focus of your answer

- Describe your past work experience.

- What do you know about our organization?

- Tell me about your experience using this (program/software).

Direct Question Example

Describe your past work experience.

How to Approach it:

As a graduate student, you may not have been employed before, but you probably have relevant experiences through being in school that you can draw on when answering this questions. Your teaching experience, volunteer or committee work, and your academic projects can all be used as examples of past work experiences.

When talking about your previous employment, rather than simply list jobs that you've had, **speak to what you've gained from each role.** For example, discuss areas of personal development, skills that you learned, qualifications you earned, and other competencies that you developed. Try to also make connections between your previous experience and how it could benefit you in the job that you're interviewing for.

Direct Question Example

What do you know about our organization?

How to Approach it:

Always research the organization you're applying to before your interview. It is important to be able to speak to not only the organizational culture, **but also how you'll fit into it.** Come prepared to discuss some features of the organization that you found interesting or that align with your values. This shows the interviewer how you'll complement their purpose if you're hired and can also be a good way to show your enthusiasm about the potential of being part of the company.

Workshop and Events

Interview Strategies for Non-Academic Careers

Learn how to prepare for a non-academic interview and enhance your confidence by attending this workshop through **Career Services,** designed to help you effectively answer common interview questions, and speak more confidently about your skills and accomplishments in a non-academic context.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Behavioural-Descriptive Questions:
Questions about what you did in or how you handled a particular situation based on past experience

- Describe a time when you had to take on something new and had little to no guidance. How did you handle it?

- Tell me about a situation where you had to manage multiple projects simultaneously.

- Tell me about a time when you had to come up with an innovative solution to a problem.

- Describe a situation or project where you made a mistake and what you learned from it.

Behavioural-Descriptive Question Example

Describe a situation or project where you made a mistake and what you learned from it.

How to Approach it:

When responding to behavioural-descriptive questions, limit your answers to examples of times when you've handled a situation well, despite facing challenges. Employers ask these questions because they assume **the way you managed a situation in the past will be a good indication of how you'll respond in the future.**

This means it's also important to be honest in your answers. Always talk about real world experiences as the employer may ask follow up questions about how you handled the situation and what happened as a result of your actions. For a more detailed breakdown of how to answer behavioural-descriptive questions using the SPARC technique, see page 104 of this toolkit.
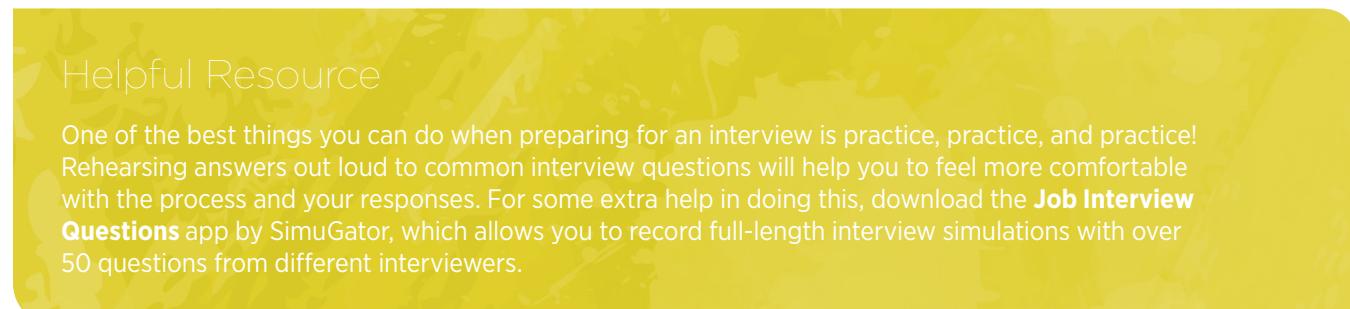
Helpful Resource

One of the best things you can do when preparing for an interview is practice, practice, and practice! Rehearsing answers out loud to common interview questions will help you to feel more comfortable with the process and your responses. For some extra help in doing this, download the **Job Interview Questions** app by SimuGator, which allows you to record full-length interview simulations with over 50 questions from different interviewers.

Hypothetical Questions:
Questions that assess your ability to handle situations you might encounter in the future

- What would you do if you knew that you would not make a project deadline?

- You're working on a project and a co-worker gives you unwanted advice. What do you do?

- What would you do if the work of a team member were not up to expectations?

- How would you react if you believed strongly in a recommendation you made to management but they rejected it?

Hypothetical Question Example

What would you do if the work of a team member were not up to expectations?

How to Approach it:

Hypothetical interview questions usually have an underlying issue or theme that the interviewer is trying to address. In this case, the interviewer is probably interested in knowing about how you communicate with others and handle conflict in teams. If you can identify what type of information the interviewer wants, you can focus your answer on this and give them a more meaningful answer. Not unlike behavioural-descriptive questions, it's best to **focus on actions you'll take to resolve the issue, rather than the issue itself.**

With hypothetical questions, you want to **answer the question as if you already worked for the organization,** so keep the company's mission and policies in mind when responding. Try to use language that aligns with the values and interests of the organization as best you can. Researching the company in advance can help you with this. Note that hypothetical questions also follow the same general format as behavioural-descriptive questions, so you can use the SPARC technique in this case as well (see page 110).

Tip for Success

Hypothetical questions are difficult to anticipate and can be challenging to answer. Employers understand that you may have to think about your response, so take your time. It's okay to pause before answering and to ask the interviewer to rephrase or clarify the question. You may also want to express to the interviewer that their question is interesting and that you'd like a second to think about it before giving a response. Another option is to ask that they come back to the question later. **The interviewer will likely appreciate your desire to provide a well-thought out answer** rather than trying to come up with something on the spot.

Academic Positions

Applying for an academic job is unique in that unlike most other jobs, you'll speak more so to your **potential** and **future contributions,** rather than your previous experiences. Go into the interview with an understanding of how you plan on contributing to the field, the department, and the development of both yourself and your future students.

Common Questions:
Question you're likely to be asked when interviewing for an academic position

- Why do you want to teach at this institution?

- Describe your current academic work and its contribution to the field.

- What do you think will be the most important advancement in your field in the next decade?

- Tell me about the most difficult class you've ever taught.

- Describe a situation in your program where there was a conflict and how you resolved it.

- What expertise do you bring that would be an asset to this department?

- Tell me about your next project.

- What kinds of roles have you played in academia already and what additional roles are you prepared to assume as a professor?

- Describe your dissertation, its contribution to the field, and the publications associated with your work.

- Tell me how you'd teach [Course X]?

- What are your plans for publication in the next five years?

- Describe a course you'd develop for us either at the undergraduate or graduate level.

- How would you mentor a graduate student?

- How do you see your work fitting into the work we do here at the department?

- Who are the biggest scholarly influences on your work?

- What do you think is the most important intellectual debate in your field?

- What inspires your teaching?

Tip for Success

Whenever possible, **refer to the work of your interviewers when applying to an academic job** and acknowledge how they have inspired your own contributions to the field. Always inquire before the interview about who will be on your panel so that you can research both the institution and the interviewers. According to ALIS[5], **applicants who take the time to find out something about the employer are more likely to get the job.**

Answering Interview Questions

The SPARC Technique

Just like in your resume, being able to show your skills and abilities to an employer is better than simply telling them. **The SPARC technique** is a formula you can use when answering interview questions that will ensure you cover all the key components an employer is looking for in a response. Using the SPARC technique will guarantee that you not only describe your experience well, but also that you effectively show your accomplishments and skills.

S   **Situation:** Describe the circumstance of your accomplishment or answer by providing enough details so that the interviewer understands the context of your story.

P   **Problem (or task):** Explain what problem you needed to solve or task that you needed to complete and describe any challenges that you faced during this process.

A   **Action:** Describe the specific actions you took to address the problem and the sequence in which you did them. Your goal here is to show your skills and competencies.

R   **Result:** Explain what the positive results of your actions were to show the employer the effectiveness of your skills and how you can benefit the employer.

C   **Close:** Summarize in one or two sentences what you learned or what your accomplishment says about key competencies that the employer wants you to demonstrate.

Question:
Describe a situation when you received constructive criticism from an employer and how you dealt with this feedback.

Non-SPARC Answer:	SPARC Answer:
When completing my graduate training I was working in a lab leading a team of undergraduate students. At one point in the semester my supervisor informed me that I could improve on my delegation skills. I took this feedback seriously and incorporated it into my daily practice, which I think improved my relationship with the students and our work.	**S –** While completing my graduate training I served as the lead researcher in a medical genetics lab for two years where I was tasked with overseeing the work of a team of 10 undergraduate students. **P –** As part of my bi-annual review, I received feedback that I could improve my delegation skills with the other students in the lab by defining my expectations. **A –** I thanked my supervisor for the feedback and requested we schedule a follow-up meeting to further discuss my review after reflecting on what was discussed given my commitment to providing quality leadership to the lab. **R –** Following our second meeting, I incorporated the feedback into my work by following up with each student on a weekly basis to ensure that they understood my instructions and had the opportunity to express any concerns. I also initiated a monthly review process that invited students to provide feedback on my leadership skills and note areas for further improvement. **C –** By being open to this feedback and willing to learn I was able to improve my leadership and communication skills, and enhance the productivity of our lab, allowing us to complete a major project two months ahead of deadline.

Give it a try!
writing SPARC answers

Answer to the following interview question using the SPARC technique. Remember that you can draw on your work, volunteer, or academic experiences when answering the question.

Question:
Describe a time when you faced a significant obstacle to succeeding with an important work project or activity and how you overcame it.

SPARC Answer:

S –

P –

A –

R –

C –

Helpful Resource

Visit the **Glassdoor**[6] website where you can find real interview questions that hiring managers are asking other candidates from organizations that you're interested in working for. You can also find accounts of recent interview experiences at these companies and see how successful applicants are answering questions that they've been asked during the interview process. Finally, get first hand accounts of how previous applicants got an interview in the first place and advice on how you may be able to enhance your own success in getting a call back.

Responding to Illegal Questions

There are some topics during an interview that hiring committees aren't permitted to ask about. These are considered illegal questions and you're in no way obligated to answer them. In Canada, these would include questions that relate to areas of:

- Marital status
- Family or number of children
- Citizenship
- Religious or political beliefs

- Sexual orientation
- Race or ethnicity
- Gender
- Age

- Disability
- Medical history

Note that other **personal information** not deemed relevant to the job (e.g., your lifestyle or habits) is also considered off limits in the context of an interview.

While these questions are considered illegal, you may be asked questions about some of these topics. Many times, interviewers themselves may not be aware of the legalities of the interview, and so it's important that you approach your response in a sensitive way. Always remember that with an illegal question **it's your choice whether you choose to respond.** Never feel obligated to provide an answer to a question that you're not comfortable with. For more information or to file a human rights complaint, visit the **Alberta Human Rights Commission** website at underlineed albertahumanrights.ab.ca.

Possible responses to illegal questions include:

- "I'd prefer to not discuss personal issues during interviews, but I would be happy to answer any other questions that you might have for me".

- "I would rather focus on job-related issues than personal ones".

- "I am confident that my [personal quality] will not impact my performance in this job".

There may also be times when you're asked an illegal question and you can decipher the intent of the interviewer. When this is the case, feel free to address the underlying question that is posed. For example:

The question might be: "Do you have children?"

The underlying question is: "Do you have the capacity/availability to meet the demands of this job?"

Your response might be: "If you mean to ask whether I can meet the demands of the job, I can assure you that I am committed to making my work a priority."

Helpful Resource

If you'd like to practice your interview strategies in advance, consider booking a 30-minute **mock interview** through **Career Services.** The better able you are to create an interview situation that resembles the actual interview, the more confident you'll feel when you get there. In this session you'll do a simulated interview with customized questions from a human resource professional and receive feedback highlighting your strengths and areas for improvement. Practice not only your responses to questions, but also your non-verbal communication skills, such as body language and posture.

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

It's not uncommon at the end of the interview to be asked if you have any questions for the interviewer. Coming prepared with good questions will show both your curiosity about the organization and your interest in the position. Not only will asking questions let the interviewer know that you're invested in them, but they can also help you determine whether the position is a good fit for you. Good questions should make the interviewer think and will contain answers that can't be found on the organization's website or in the job posting. It is recommended that you ask one or two questions at the end of every interview. Here are some ideas of questions that you might want to ask and why:

"What is one of the most interesting projects you've had the opportunity to work on?"

This question will give you some insight into what attracted the interviewer to the organization and give you an idea of the type of work you'd be doing.

"Where do you see this company in five years?"

Go into every interview with the plan of being there for at least a year. This will help you decide if it's the right job for you and shows you're invested in the organization's success.

"In your opinion, what characteristics are needed for success with this organization?"

It's important to think about whether you'll be a good fit for the job. Asking about what they want from you will show you're committed to being a quality employee.

"What is your preferred style of management?"

This question gives you an idea of what it would be like to work for the interviewer. How they answer will help you decide whether you'd work well together.

Non-Academic Positions

• How would a typical day on the job look?

• What is the first task or problem that would need attention from this position?

• How has the job been performed in the past?

• What are other requirements of the successful candidate that aren't a formal part of the job?

• What type of training is provided?

• What would you like to say about the new hire a year from now?

• Can I clarify anything more for you about my skills, education, or experience?

Academic Positions

• What is the relative importance of teaching, research, and service for tenure?

• Tell me about your student population.

• How do the department and the university support the improvement of teaching?

• What is the long-term plan for this institution and how does the department fit into it?

• How would you describe your institution's or department's current strengths/weaknesses?

• What kinds of financial support are available for research?

• What programs are available for new faculty?

Sending a Thank You Letter/Email

Within 24 hours of your interview, send out either a hand-written or email thank you letter to the employer. You want to make sure that your note reaches the hiring committee or manager before a decision is made, and so it's important to do this as soon after the interview as possible.

This customary practice will give you the opportunity to **re-state your interest in the position and thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.** Not only that, but it can be a final opportunity for you to showcase the skills and strengths you'll bring to the job. Remember, when speaking to your abilities it's important to not just state what you can offer, but to also explain **why** you'd be an ideal fit for the organization and **how** you'd contribute.

Send

To...

Cc...

Subject: Thank You – Director of Development Position

Dear Mr. or Ms. (their last name),

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the director of development position at Ronald McDonald House Charities with me. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you and your team, as well as to learn more about the organization and available position.

After meeting with you and observing the company's operations and culture, I am further convinced that my background and skills coincide with your needs. It is my belief that my previous planning and development experience gained through completing my graduate training in marketing would complement your team. Specifically, my experience organizing fundraising events with the Heart & Stroke Foundation would be an asset for the new strategic plans of the organization and I am eager to have the opportunity to demonstrate that value.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you concerning your hiring decision.

Sincerely,
(Your full name and contact information)

Tip for Success

Keep your email brief and **use short paragraphs to communicate your message,** rather than lumping everything into one. Include the job title that you interviewed for in the subject line so that the person receiving the email can quickly determine what it is in reference to. Be specific and concise in your email and make it personal by referring to conversations that you had during the interview. You may also want to take this time to reiterate why you think you'd be an asset to the organization. Always conclude your letter with this same confidence.

Etiquette of Evaluating and Negotiating a Job Offer

The most successful negotiations begin before the interview takes place. While it can be awkward to negotiate things like salary and benefits with a potential employer, it's generally expected that you'll do so. In fact, the first offer is often made with this in mind. Here are some strategies that you can use before, during, and after the interview to help you evaluate job offers and enhance your negotiation skills to land your ideal job.

BEFORE

Educate Yourself
Talk to People
Clarify your Expectations

DURING

Let Them Offer
Suggest a Range
Take your Time

AFTER

Express Gratitude
Trust your Gut
Be Courteous

Before the interview

1. **Educate Yourself —** Research the organization and position you're applying to by searching for information about **typical salary ranges** for the role. Many organizations also have their **collective agreement** available to the public, so take the time to review documents such as these to gather information about the terms and conditions of employment. This will give you a better understanding of the type of offer you might expect or would be willing to accept, and can help you identify the value of your skills and experiences.

2. **Talk to People —** Speak with people you know who work in similar roles to see if they might be comfortable discussing their own **salary, benefits, and conditions or terms of employment.** This is a good opportunity for you to reconnect with people who you've done informational interviews with in the past to get their insight and expertise on the topic.

3. **Clarify your Expectations —** If you have an idea about what you expect from an employer, write this down before the interview. While salary is one aspect of a job, there are many other forms of compensation to consider. When you receive a job offer, you can compare and contrast your expectations with what you're being offered to make a more informed decision. It will also help you to **clarify your "bottom line" or the minimum that you'd be willing to accept.** For an example of how you can go about evaluating a job offer, fill out the worksheet on the next page.

Helpful Resource

Visit **Pay Scale**[7] to get free salary reports based on job offers that you're evaluating or potential jobs that you've researched. Other websites offering salary reports and information include **Glassdoor**[8]**, Indeed**[9]**,** and the **Canadian Salary Calculator**[10] from Monster.

Job Offer Evaluation/Negotiation Worksheet

Terms of Work	My Expectations/Needs	Job Offer/Information
Salary / Hourly wage	$	$
Additional Monetary Compensation	Signing bonus Annual bonus Overtime Stock options Spring and Summer teaching Research fund Other: _____ Other: _____	Signing bonus Annual bonus Overtime Stock options Spring and Summer teaching Research fund Other: _____ Other: _____
Accommodations	Cost of relocating: Cost of living: Commute Time: Parking:	Cost of relocating: Cost of living: Commute Time: Parking:
Paid Time Off	Paid Leave: Vacation days: Sick days: Working days or hours:	Paid Leave: Vacation days: Sick days: Working days or hours:

Adapted from the Career Preparation Toolkit[11], UCLA

Terms of Work	My Expectations/Needs	Job Offer/Information
Coverage/Benefits	Retirement:	Retirement:
	Professional development: (conference attendance, professional membership, certification/training)	Professional development: (conference attendance, professional membership, certification/training)
	Employee programs: (mentorship, sponsorship, incentives)	Employee programs: (mentorship, sponsorship, incentives)
	Health/dental:	Health/dental:
	Education/family: (tuition reimbursement, childcare/daycare)	Education/family: (tuition reimbursement, childcare/daycare)
Other Conditions	Travel Flextime/telecommuting Onsite fitness centre Employee discounts Other: _____ Other: _____	Travel Flextime/telecommuting Onsite fitness centre Employee discounts Other: _____ Other: _____

Adapted from the Career Preparation Toolkit[11], UCLA

During the Interview

1. **Let Them Make an Offer —** Discussions about salary usually happen early in the process. If the topic of wages comes up during the interview, **let them make the first offer.** If you like, you can also initiate this conversation by asking about the typical salary for the position you're applying at the end of the interview.

2. **Suggest a Range —** If you're expected to disclose your expected salary, **always suggest a range** rather than a specific value. You can support this by explaining to the employer that the number is based on typical compensation for your level of experience and for comparable jobs. It is a common rule of thumb when negotiating salary to always stay within **10% of the original offer.**

3. **Take your Time —** In rare cases, you may be offered a job on the spot. It can be tempting to accept the first offer you get, but be sure to review it before making any decision by requesting time to review the offer. However, most job offers have an expiration date, so be sure to discuss with your potential employer what a **reasonable timeline might be for you to get back to them.** You can also express to them that you'd like to discuss the offer in more detail at a later date.

Tips for Success

To help you understand and evaluate a job offer, always request that the employer provide you with a **written version of what they are willing to offer.** If any details are unclear, discuss them with the employer rather than trying to guess. The best place to negotiate from is a well-informed one!

After the Interview

1. **Express Your Gratitude —** Whether or not you plan to accept a job, it's common courtesy to follow up with the organization to **thank them for the offer.** Even if you feel the offer is unfair, expressing that you're excited to receive it and are interested in the position will show the employer that you take the offer seriously and they are more likely to negotiate with you as a result.

2. **Trust Your Gut —** While evaluating job offers can seem like a technical process, it's also important to pay attention to **how you feel about the offer.** Are you genuinely interested in the position? Are there other opportunities or offers that you're hoping for or have already received? Does the job align with your work values? Does the workplace culture suit you? Ask yourself these questions before making a decision about what to do.

3. **Be Courteous —** If you're waiting for an offer from another organization, be sure to inform them of the position you're in. Let the other employer know your timeline for accepting your current offer and reiterate your interest in working for them. Once you've made your decision, **contact both employers** and express your gratitude for their consideration of your application.

Making the Counter Offer

1. **Be Professional —** Going through the process of negotiating a job offer is a delicate process that must be managed appropriately. While you often have some room for compromise, asking for too much or coming on too strong can cause an employer to retract their offer. If you are negotiating pay, remember to focus on professional rather than personal reasons why you think you deserve a higher wage. To make a stronger argument, support your request with evidence of typical salary ranges and your qualifications.

2. **Identify Areas of Negotiation —** Make a decision about **what you want from the employer** (your ideal situation) and what **you're willing to accept at minimum** (your bottom line). Once you've identified your points of negotiation, check with the employer about where they see room for flexibility and suggest possible compromises. Always approach this conversation tentatively yet firmly, requesting the input of the employer while simultaneously making a strong case for your position.

3. **Get it in Writing —** Try to leave all negotiations until a formal offer has been made. If any changes to the offer are made, be sure to have the employer write up a revised contract that reflects these revisions and **request a copy** for your records.

What's Negotiable?

When evaluating the job offer, take into account more than just salary. There are a number of other facets of the job worth considering in the negotiation process. Depending on your needs, some benefits or perks may be more valuable than others, and it's worth considering what's important to you and where the employer may have some flexibility. Here is a list of things that you might consider negotiating:

- Accommodations (housing, travel costs, transportation, parking)
- Bonuses (signing or annual)
- Flextime or telecommuting options
- Investment or stock options

- Pre-tenure leave, time to tenure
- Professional development opportunities
- Salary or other monetary benefits
- Service Commitments

- Start date, working days and hours
- Teaching requirements
- Vacation time or leave

Workshop and Events

Negotiating Your Dream Job

Develop techniques and strategies that will put you in the driver's seat when it comes to compensation for your skills. Take part in this **Graduate Students' Association** hosted workshop and learn how to effectively communicate and close negotiations on top by engaging in mock negotiations with your peers in a safe environment before bringing your skills to the workplace.

Endorsed by My GradSkills

Negotiating Cheat Sheet

Knowing how to negotiate a job offer isn't always easy. It is important to be both professional and polite in this process to not only maximize your success in getting what you want, but also to maintain the relationship you have with your potential employer. To help you do this, the Graduate Students' Association has created this cheat sheet so that you can negotiate like a pro.

General Responses

- That's an interesting offer

- I'm interested in discussing possible areas of negotiation with you

Ask Them

- I'm interested to know, where did you get that figure?

- What prompted you to decide on that (price, deadline, specification)?

Responses to an Offer

- Your offer is reasonable for the most part. Would you consider including (benefits, another week of holidays, etc.)?

- I agree with most of your offer. The point I'm wondering if you might consider negotiating is...

Countering the Offer

- I can give you... if you can include...

- I need... because...

- I believe it would be fair if... because...

- Is that the best you can do?

- What's your bottom line?

- What would it take to have you increase (or lower) your offer?

- Would you consider...?

Work with Them

- How do you think we can resolve this?

- Suppose we were to...

- Would... provide a solution?

Dealing with Objections

- Are you saying that if I can satisfy this objection, we would have a deal?

- Is this the only barrier to an agreement?

- What makes you say that?

If They Need to Think About It

- What questions remain?

- Could you think about it out loud?

- I can help you to think about it if you tell me what your concerns are

Split the Difference

- I'm at (a number) and you're at (a number). Would you be happy with (a number in between)?

Set Boundaries

- I'm wondering if I accept that term what you can do for me?

- If we can't negotiate... would you be willing to negotiate... instead?

- This is something that's important to me. How can we come up with a solution?

Adapted from the Graduate Students' Association, University of Calgary

Career Decision-Making Matrix

You may occasionally find yourself in a situation where you've received multiple job offers. Or perhaps you're struggling with making a decision about a particular path to take. In these cases, it can be helpful to reflect on and weigh out each alternative. The following matrix can be used as a tool to help you make a more informed decision about what path might be best for you based on your values.

Review each factor that is listed and rank the importance from 1-10. Then place that number in the column with the option you feel best aligns with that factor. Then, add up the total for each column. The column with the **highest total** will indicate the option that most closely represents factors important to you.

Factor: Area of importance	Importance (1-10 with 10 being the most important)	Option 1	Option 2
Enjoyment: Which type of work would I still enjoy doing three years from now?			
Time: Which work schedule would be a better match for my time?			
Home and Leisure: Which place would provide a better work/life balance?			
Status: Which organization would I be proud to say that I work at most?			
Flexibility: Which opportunity would provide the most flexibility regarding work schedule?			
Location of Work: Which position has a better commute?			
Achievement: Which position would allow me to grow most professionally?			
Creativity: Which position would allow me to try new things?			
Adventure: Which position would provide the most fun or greatest challenge?			
Culture: Which position best fits my own cultural background or orientation?			
Health: Which position would allow me to be healthiest?			
Stability: Is there financial stability with the department? Organization?			
Other:			
Other:			
Total			

Adapted from Inside Higher Ed[11]

Making Your Decision

Whether you've decided to accept your offer or decline it, it's customary to **write a formal letter** informing the employer of your decision. Even if you won't be working for the organization, you'll likely find yourself in similar networks with people who do, and they may continue to play a role in your life in other capacities so it's important to maintain positive relationships. For example, you might see them at conferences, you may attend the same networking and social events, or if you're working within the academic environment, someone from the department may serve as an external reviewer for your publications. It is always better to **keep lines of communication open,** regardless of whether you choose to accept or decline an offer.

When You Get the Job

Congratulations, you've been offered a job! Take some time to celebrate your success and hard work before you start. As you transition into your new role, remember that career planning and development is an ongoing process that will continue throughout your working life. In completing this toolkit, you've already done a lot of work towards reaching your career goals, but it doesn't stop here.

Our economy is changing and growing at a rapid rate, which means that as someone entering the workforce, you'll also need to be adaptable. According to futurist Thomas Frey, **60% of the jobs that people will have 10 years from now haven't been invented yet.** Jobs and careers are going to evolve over time, and it's important that you do too. By being active and involved in your own career planning and lifelong development, you can ensure your career success both now and in the future.

When You Don't Get the Job

Most people will face rejection at some point during their job search. In fact, this is a normal part of the process. Here are some tips to help you deal with it:

- **Keep your confidence:** Rejection isn't personal to the employer and it shouldn't be for you. Often the reason you don't get a job isn't because you weren't capable, but because someone else was simply a better fit. Maintaining confidence is a big part of showing potential employers that you're qualified, and so it's important to not let rejection get you down.

- **Ask for feedback:** If you want to know how you can improve your application and/or interview skills, you may want to ask the person who interviewed you for feedback on your performance. There's no harm in asking for constructive comments or information about how you could improve. Remember that when you receive this feedback it isn't about what you did wrong, but how you could do better.

- **See the opportunity:** Getting a "no" from one employer could mean getting a "yes" from another. If you take rejection as an opportunity to learn and grow from this experience, you'll be more likely to approach your next interview with confidence and skill, increasing your chances of success.

Helpful Resource

All students at the University of Calgary are entitled to **counselling services** through the **Wellness Centre**[12], the cost of which is covered through your student fees. If you're struggling with your job search or other career concerns, feel free to book an appointment with a counsellor on campus that can help you with navigating this difficult transition.

References

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Notes

You've Made It!

If you've made it this far, you've done a lot of work. Well done! Working your way through the My CareerSkills Toolkit has helped you get one step closer to reaching your career goals! You've developed essential skills to not only better understand yourself, but also your career plans. By going through the stages of getting to know yourself, exploring your career options, focusing your job search, and taking action to find work, you can now successfully navigate the process of a typical work search.

By using what you learn from this toolkit, you'll be able to find a job that's right for you and make the most of your career. As you leave academia and enter the workforce, we hope that you continue to work towards using the skills you've developed as a graduate student to achieve your career goals.

We'd like to hear from you...

If you have any questions about this toolkit or would like to give feedback about how it's helped you get your first job or reach your career goals, please contact us at:

My GradSkills Program
mygradskills@ucalgary.ca

Faculty of Graduate Studies
graduate@ucalgary.ca

> "A PhD is a qualification, not an identity. Think of yourself as a professional with a PhD."
>
> – Chris Humphrey (2016), Founder, JobsOnToast.com

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