

# PROFESSIONAL

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

An information interview is a meeting that you set up with someone who is doing the work in an occupational field that interests you! It is as simple as that yet it is incredible useful in the career exploration process (as well as when you are ready to look for employment!).

### Information interviews help you:

- Learn about different areas of interest (occupations, job titles, education expectations, work prospects, and future directions for the profession/field).
- Discover new or different areas to what you have been considering.
- Learn what skills you will need to do the job effectively.
- Network and make personal contacts.
- Gain insight into the hidden job market.
- Become aware of the needs of employers and the realities of employment.
- Gain confidence in talking with people while learning what you need to know.
- Learn where you might fit into a particular company, organization or profession.

### Type of questions you might ask when exploring careers:

- What does a typical day or week look like?
- How did you get your present job and how did you get started in this field?
- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
- Are there education programs that I should be aware of for success/entry into this field?
- How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation?
- What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job?
- What are the major frustrations of this job? Of this field?
- What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?
- What personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?
- Is there an association I can join, or an association meeting I can attend?
- Is there anything else I should know?
- Is there someone you would suggest I speak with for more information on...?

## Steps to setting up an Information Interview for Career Exploration

- 1) Gather as much information as possible about the profession
  - With the on-line resources on the Student Success Centre website – [www.studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca](http://www.studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca) – personal growth – career exploration section
- 2) Develop a leads list
  - From your research- professional association membership listings, talk with professors, friends, family who might know of someone, McMaster Alumni & Partner Network database, and LinkedIn McMaster Alumni group.
- 3) Prepare a list of questions
  - Think of questions that will verify what you already think you know as well as questions that you don't have answers to.
  - It's particularly useful to address barriers you feel you have. For example, you can ask how someone with your current set of skills and experience can overcome the "lack of experience" issue or ask what organizations might most value your background.
  - You can use the questions suggested or customize them to help you get the answers you need.
- 4) Make the connection
  - Introduce yourself and explain where you got their name/contact (a referral or from a directory etc.).
  - Explain that you are a McMaster Student (or Alumni) and are currently researching career options and would like to speak to them to get information/advice about the profession.
  - Ask for 10-15 minutes of their time and you can arrange an inperson meeting or a time to talk on the phone.
  - You can initiate the contact by phone, or e-mail.
- 5) Be sure to keep a record of meeting place, time, and contact info. Ensure you have their contact info and they have yours in case either party needs to reschedule.
- 6) During the meeting
  - Dress appropriately.
  - Bring paper, pen, and list of your questions
  - You can bring a copy of your resume incase they ask for it.
  - Be prepared to talk about yourself and why this area interests you.
  - Take notes on leads, resources, further contacts, suggestions etc.
  - Be enthusiastic and show interest. Be direct and concise with your questions and answers.
  - Maintain good eye contact and posture. Be positive in your remarks.
  - Be aware of the time limit- allow yourself 15 minutes but be prepared to stay longer if the person has more time to offer.
- 7) Send a thank you note

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- You can also keep the person informed of your progress if you feel it's appropriate.