

Career Planning Notebook

**BRIGHTER
WORLD**

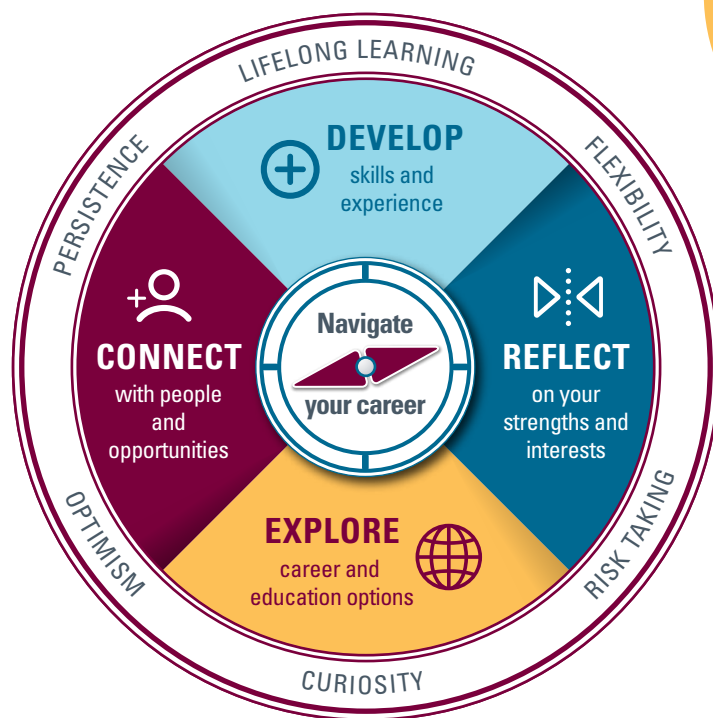
Student Success
Centre

McMaster
University 

The Student Success Centre

The Student Success Centre can help you navigate your career. Based on our career development model, this notebook will guide you to:

- ✓ Reflect on your interests and identify your personal skills
- ✓ Explore your career and education options
- ✓ Connect with people and opportunities
- ✓ Develop skills and gain experience



You don't have to wait until you graduate to start developing your career.

Check the back of this notebook for year-specific action plans to help you get started and stay on track.

A career isn't something you find — it's something you develop and manage over time.

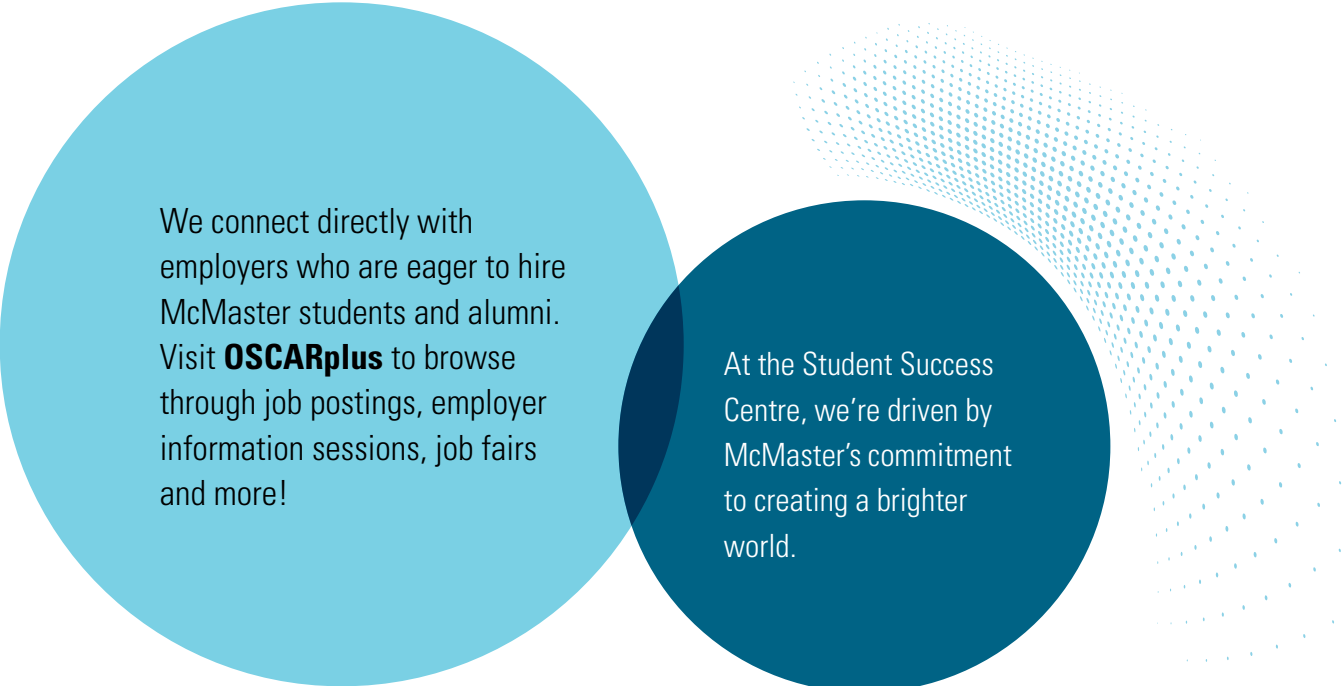
Our career development model can help you work your way through this process. We encourage you to be:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| ✓ Flexible | ✓ Persistent |
| ✓ Curious | ✓ Willing to take risks |
| ✓ Optimistic | |

Take action on oscarplushcmcmaster.ca

As McMaster's job posting, appointment and registration system, OSCARplus connects you with valuable opportunities and resources such as:

- ✓ Thousands of summer, part-time, final-year and post-graduation jobs
- ✓ Volunteer and on-the-job learning opportunities
- ✓ Experiential opportunities such as placements, internships and job shadowing
- ✓ Events, workshops and fairs offered by the Student Success Centre and community partners
- ✓ Registration for workshops to support your career development
- ✓ Registration for appointments and counselling offered by career professionals



We connect directly with employers who are eager to hire McMaster students and alumni. Visit **OSCARplus** to browse through job postings, employer information sessions, job fairs and more!

At the Student Success Centre, we're driven by McMaster's commitment to creating a brighter world.

REFLECT

Reflect on your strengths, interests and experiences to identify and gain confidence in your skills and career values.

Our services

- Career counselling for undergraduate students and alumni (up to 10 years after graduation)
- Career planning sessions and programs
- Career assessments to help you identify your strengths, interests and skills
- Activities and resources to build self-awareness and explore career and further education options

Our expert advice



"If you are trying to make decisions about career or education pathways and feeling stuck, take some time to understand what matters to you the most. The time you spend clarifying your strengths, values and interests will be well worth it."

— Kerri Latham, career counsellor

Your feedback

"I learned a lot about my values and what I want out of my career. [This] helped me organize my thoughts and ease career-related anxiety."

— Career counselling participant



EXPLORE

Be proactive. Explore your career and education options.

Our services

- Career and further education tools and services
- Guidance to connect with and learn from alumni and industry professionals
- Career fairs and the Further Education Fair
- Career counselling



Our expert advice

"Your program does not define what your options are. Often, we focus on job titles or what career our degree will lead to, but many careers do not have a clearly defined path. Investigate and get curious — there are so many amazing pathways you can discover or create!"

— Tanya Kett, career development advisor



Your feedback

"[When I was] a stressed fourth-year student, Tanya was able to provide me with reassuring feedback and constructive critiques that enabled me to reduce my anxiety surrounding my graduate school application."

— Further education advising participant

CONNECT

Connect with people and opportunities through effective job search strategies and relationship building.

Our services

- Job search coaching: one-on-one support with resume and cover letter writing, LinkedIn, networking, interviews and job search strategies
- Employment preparation workshops
- Individual assistance, tools and programs to help you connect with alumni and professionals
- Mentoring programs
- Career fairs and company information sessions
- Career Access Professional Services (CAPS) for students or alumni who identify as a member of an equity-seeking group or have barriers to employment

Our expert advice



“Connecting with people and investing in relationships is one of the best ways to explore careers and opportunities. You can discover practical and insightful information from someone in your career or industry of choice. Having a network can help you find your path, open doors and support your career development.”

— Anna Magnotta, manager, experiential programs

Your feedback

“When I began my job search, I had very little idea how to go about it — especially how to network to discover new job opportunities. My CAPS advisor was able to provide me [with] valuable resources and support that I needed to be successful in my search. This came in the form of resume critiques, personalized one-on-ones to discuss progress and interview prep that was crucial to my success as an applicant.”

— Career Access Professional Services (CAPS) participant



DEVELOP



Develop your skills and gain experience to help you grow professionally.

Our services

- Job shadow services and programs
- Experience-building placements and programs
- Guidance with finding volunteer opportunities
- Global experience supports and opportunities
- Community Engagement and Volunteer Fair
- Job search coaching to help you find employment
- Job and volunteer postings on OSCARplus



Our expert advice

“Every experience counts! Short-term, unpaid opportunities allow you to explore different careers

and industries, make a connection between your course work and the professional world, and expand your skills. Keep an open mind, and participate in a variety of opportunities to help clarify your interests and career goals — the ones outside your degree might just provide the most meaningful experience.”

— *Stephanie Cognigni,*
experiential programming and outreach coordinator



Your feedback

“Volunteering is where I got to experience different career paths, which helped me narrow down not only what kind of industry I wanted to work in, but also which of my skills I want to exercise in my future.”

— *Volunteer program participant*

NAVIGATE

Navigate your career path by continuing to try and learn new things. There will be challenges along the way, so stay flexible, optimistic and persistent.

Our services

- Career counselling for undergraduate students and alumni up to 10 years after graduation
- Career Access Professional Services (CAPS) for students or alumni who identify as a member of an equity-seeking group or have barriers to employment



Our expert advice

“Appreciate the uniqueness of your career journey. Careers are not linear, and everyone’s path and timelines will be different. Keep in mind that there are often many ways to get to the same place. During the ups and downs, adopt a positive mindset so you can learn and grow from your mistakes and successes.”

— *Jillian Perkins-Marsh, alumni career counsellor*

Your feedback

“Thank you for all your help over the past few months, you have no idea how much you have helped me to organize my thoughts about this whole process to find [a career] that I will be truly happy with.”

— *Career counselling participant*

DISCOVER YOUR POTENTIAL AT MAC

You can use the suggestions in this section as a starting point to develop a plan that suits your specific needs and goals. Customize your plan by adding in your goals and activities in the notes sections.

Making a plan will help you:

- ✓ Reflect on your interests and previous experiences
- ✓ Discover opportunities to explore and develop your skills
- ✓ Identify potential obstacles
- ✓ Meet your university and career goals

Resist comparing yourself or your plan to others. Everyone has their own goals, and everyone's career journey progresses at a different pace.





1

Suggested first-year plan

- ☐ Get to know OSCARplus, including how to register for events and book appointments.
- ☐ Attend an SSC resume lab to help you update your high school resume.
- ☐ Attend a summer job search event and check for summer job postings on OSCARplus in early January.
- ☐ Join one club or find one volunteer opportunity to explore your interests and develop career-ready skills.
- ☐ Explore your academic options (minors, elective courses, experiential courses, etc.) to customize your degree.
- ☐ Meet with an academic coach and a writing advisor. This will help you develop your academic and career-ready skills.
- ☐ Book an appointment with Mac's Money Centre to discuss your budget.

Notes

Reflect on it

Think about an accomplishment that makes you proud. What skills, abilities or characteristics did you use to make it happen?



2

Suggested second-year plan

- ☐ Attend the Volunteer and Community Engagement Fair in September and find a volunteer placement.
- ☐ Get your resume critiqued or attend a workshop to update your resume with a focus on transferrable skills.
- ☐ Join a student club or [McMaster Students Union \(MSU\)](#) service. Consider taking on a leadership role to develop your skills.
- ☐ Attend International Education Week events in November to explore global experience and exchange opportunities.
- ☐ Attend career planning sessions to explore career paths related to your strengths and interests.
- ☐ Go beyond Google and learn how to use career information databases to research careers and labour markets.
- ☐ Explore different career fields. Use the [Alumni and Partners Advisor Network](#) to connect with alumni in different fields.

Notes

Reflect on it

Think about a “lucky break” or “happy coincidence” in your life. How did this moment open doors for you? Was there something you did to help create this moment?



3

Suggested third-year plan

- ☐ Reflect on your favourite work and volunteer experiences, paid or unpaid. What skills and strengths did you develop?
- ☐ Meet with a career counsellor to discuss your values and interests, and explore careers and further education options.
- ☐ Continue to explore career and post-degree options through a job shadow or an informational interview.
- ☐ Continue to refine and develop your LinkedIn profile. Meet with a career professional to learn how to use LinkedIn to network and explore career opportunities.
- ☐ Attend the Further Education Fair in October to explore further education options and chat with representatives.
- ☐ Build relationships with professors to develop references for graduate or professional school.
- ☐ Attend career fairs in fall and winter to learn about opportunities, build connections and find jobs.
- ☐ Use LinkedIn Learning or other training platforms to develop your professional skills.

Notes

Reflect on it

When you found work in the past, which strategies were most effective for you? What's a new approach you're willing to try?

4

Suggested fourth-year plan

- ☐ Reflect on your favourite experiences so far — academic and non-academic — to identify your interests and values.
- ☐ Attend career fairs and company information sessions.
- ☐ Search and apply for final-year recruitment positions on OSCARplus.
- ☐ Go beyond job postings and develop a list of organizations and professional groups to contact.
- ☐ Shape your resume and LinkedIn profile to highlight your unique qualifications, interests and skills.
- ☐ Contact at least three professionals for informational interviews. You can use your network, LinkedIn or the [Alumni and Partners Advisor Network](#).
- ☐ Attend interview workshops and networking sessions to learn how to discuss your skills and experiences with potential employers.
- ☐ In the fall term, prepare for further education applications and attend the Further Education Fair in October.
- ☐ Attend career planning sessions to explore career paths related to your strengths and interests.

Notes

Reflect on it

If you were 10 times bolder, what would you be doing differently in your life?

LIFE AFTER MAC

Stay supported in your career development after graduation. Alumni Career Services will continue to support you for 10 years after you graduate. Visit alumni.mcmaster.ca/careers for more information.

- ☐ Attend networking events offered by [Alumni Career Services](#), brought to you by the Student Success Centre and Alumni Association.
- ☐ Meet with an alumni career counsellor to support your post-graduation goals.
- ☐ Consider volunteer, part-time and contract work to ease your transition into the workforce and continue to build skills.
- ☐ Make the most of every opportunity, paid or unpaid, by building relationships and developing skills.
- ☐ Research self-directed learning opportunities and professional certificates at colleges and universities.
- ☐ Expand your professional network by connecting with alumni and professionals in your area of interest.
- ☐ Think like an entrepreneur. Consider turning hobbies or personal projects into business opportunities.
- ☐ Expand your perspective and worldview through travel, work or volunteer opportunities.

Notes



Mac's Money Centre – Invest in your financial wellness

Are you searching for your first job and feeling unsure about wage or salary expectations?

Maybe you already have a job and you're having trouble balancing your bills and personal expenses.

The fact is, whether you're employed or not, learning how to manage your finances is an important part of your professional development.

Here's how Mac's Money Centre can help:

- One-on-one appointments with experienced money coaches to discuss debt repayment, budgeting, bills, credit cards and more
- Tax clinics to help you file your taxes
- Workshops to support your financial wellness
- Tools, worksheets, guides and other resources to help you build financial literacy, set financial goals and more

CONNECT WITH US

We'll support your career journey from your first year at McMaster up until 10 years after you graduate.

Connect with our career and employment team

- Email us at studentsuccess@mcmaster.ca.
- Attend one of our career workshops, webinars or online events. Visit OSCARplus for details and registration.
- Sign up for a one-on-one appointment on OSCARplus.
- Ask about Career Access Professional Services (CAPS) for students or alumni who identify as a member of an equity-seeking group or have barriers to employment.

We take an individualized approach when working with students and campus and community partners. When pursuing experiential learning and career development opportunities, we recognize the importance of inclusivity, diversity, accessibility, accommodation and equity.

At the Student Success Centre, we're driven by McMaster's commitment to creating a brighter world.



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