

VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR PREPARATION

WHY SHOULD YOU ATTEND?

- Gather information about employers who hire McMaster students/alumni for a variety of positions, including volunteer opportunities, co-ops, internships and summer and full-time positions.
- Research a company you may be interested in working for.
- Learn where your skill set will fit, and research key qualifications/skills you could develop to enhance your marketability.
- Chat with employers about career paths.
- Explore career possibilities.
- Network to make contacts and begin to build relationships with employers. If you are early in your university journey, networking will open up new possibilities for when you're job searching.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Preparing for a virtual fair is similar to an in-person fair. Do research, prepare questions and have your resume ready to convey professionalism and preparedness.
- Each employer will host their own booth (a small chat room) where you can chat one-on-one and ask questions.

BEFORE THE FAIR

- Register in advance and follow the instructions on the online platform.
- Update your resume and LinkedIn profile to make sure it accurately describes your skills and experiences. If you need help, resume and LinkedIn critique appointments are available on OSCARplus.
- You may be prompted to upload your resume and/or cover letter and add your LinkedIn URL when you register for the fair. Doing this will allow employers to access your information during your chats.
- Research the companies attending the fair using OSCARplus, company websites, social media, business magazines and LinkedIn. Showing potential employers that you have knowledge about and interest in their company is a great way to make a positive first impression. If you require accommodations, research companies' accessibility initiatives.
- Ensure you have a stable internet connection, and find a quiet space so you are able to concentrate. If in doubt, create a WiFi hotspot with your phone.
- Once you have researched the companies and identified the ones you're most interested in, prepare a set of questions to ask. Examples:
 - What are the main skills (soft and technical) that your organization wants candidates to have?
 - What makes a person successful in this role and/or organization?
 - What advice do you have for university students/graduates regarding getting into this field? Are there professional networking opportunities you would recommend?
 - How would you describe the culture of the organization?
 - Mention what you've learned about the organization and ask a relevant question.
- Don't ask about salary or benefits; these questions aren't appropriate for this setting.

PREPARE YOUR ELEVATOR STATEMENT

- Prepare your 30-second elevator statement. This is a “snapshot” that helps representatives understand who you are, what you do and what you want. Type out your statement in advance. Remember to customize each statement you give based on the company you’re connecting with.

DURING THE VIRTUAL FAIR

- Re-read your responses before sending them to check for spelling or grammar errors.
- Use formal language. Stay away from abbreviations or slang that you would use when texting on your phone.
- Keep answers short. Break up thoughts in smaller blocks of texts.
- Have your resume ready, prepare some pre-typed answers for common questions (i.e. your elevator statement, areas of strengths and, if possible, why you are interested in the employer).
- Be clear and concise. Answer one question at a time; ask one question at a time.
- Be polite, use professional language and remember that tone is tricky to convey in text chats, so be careful using humour or sarcasm.
- Your chat will end after 10 minutes. Prioritize what you want to ask in case you run out of time.
- Don’t forget that many people are new to these new technologies, so if you make a mistake, apologize, correct yourself and continue. Don’t let the technology intimidate you! Using the technology shows employers that you can adapt to new environments.
- Lastly, extend your thanks for the representative’s time, and ask them to stay in contact. Request to connect on LinkedIn or get their contact information to follow up with any further questions. Ensure you follow up with what you say you will do.

Remember:

- Ask key questions that you have prepared. Ask about accommodation and disclosure if needed.
- Present yourself positively and confidently.
- Avoid negative words to describe your previous employment experiences.
- Find out the hiring process for the company, including any key skills they want candidates to have.
- If you finish before the chat time is up, thank them for their time.
- If you run out of time and want to chat with the employer again, you can go back into the virtual line and wait your turn again — but avoid monopolizing their time.
- After the conversation ends, you can review the transcript and collect any important information you learned.

AFTER THE FAIR

Now that you have attended the online fair, it is time to develop a follow-up plan. Check our After the Fair tip sheet on our website to help identify what’s next.

- Keep up to date with [OSCARplus](#) to participate in online recruiting sessions that get you in contact with employers during the whole year.
- For additional support, check [OSCARplus](#) for the full range of services and events to help you succeed.