

PROFESSIONAL

CAREER FAIR PREPARATION

Career Fairs are a one-day event that brings employers onto our campus to provide information to students, about their respective companies and organizations. Most importantly, they **provide information about their recruiting process**. Although some companies will not be actively recruiting, they are still looking for potential employees to hire in the future. Therefore, remember that you are being evaluated and make the best first impression possible!

WHY SHOULD YOU ATTEND

- An opportunity to **gather information** about employers who hire McMaster students/alumni for a variety of positions, including: co-ops, internships, summer and full-time positions.
- A chance to **research** a company you may be interested in working for.
- Learn **where your skill set will fit** and about key qualifications/skills you could develop to **enhance your marketability**.
- A forum to **talk with employers** about their career paths.
- To **network** and make contacts and begin to build relationships with employers. If you are early in your studies, it will enable you to have a head start when looking for employment.

BEFORE THE FAIR

- Update your **resume and cover letter** and have it critiqued.
- Update your **LinkedIn profile**. Be sure to request to connect with your new contacts after.
- Create a **business card** to leave a lasting impression.
- **Research the companies** attending the fair using OSCARplus, company websites, social media; business magazines, talk to people who work there. Showing potential employers that you have knowledge about and an interest in their company is a great way to make a positive first impression.
- Once you have researched the companies and identified the ones that are of most interest to you, **prepare a set of questions** that you will ask at the fair. Examples:
 - What are the main skills (soft and technical) that your organization looks for in candidates for X role?
 - 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 related, relevant question.
- Questions should **not** pertain to **salary, benefits**; they are not appropriate for this setting.

PREPARE YOUR CAREER STORY INTRODUCTION

- Prepare your **30 second** elevator speech/career story introduction. This is a “snapshot” of you that the representative can use to understand who you are, what you do and what you are looking for, including your interest in the company.
- **Practice introducing yourself** and get feedback. Be yourself.

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DURING THE FAIR

First impressions count!

- Dress Appropriately – Business Casual or Business Formal
- Give a firm handshake
- Make eye contact
- Speak clearly
- Smile!

Bring the essentials: copies of your resume, a portfolio, business cards, pen and paper.

MEETING POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

Remember:

- Do **not** start the conversation by talking about **yourself first**.
- Ask **key questions** that you have prepared.
- Show that you are a good listener through **eye contact**. Give 100% of your attention to build rapport effectively.
- Present yourself positively and confidently.
- Do **not** use **negative words** to describe your previous employment experiences.
- Find out the **hiring process** for the company.
- Do **not monopolize the representative's time**. Check in with them and excuse yourself to end the conversation. Obtain follow up information, if possible.
- After conversation ends, **discreetly record details of your conversation** to be used later in follow up.

This event is not being held for individual, formal interviews, but rather to allow important contacts with companies looking to hire McMaster graduates and/or students!

AFTER THE FAIR

Simply attending the fair and handing out your resume is not going to land you that highly-coveted job; you must follow up with companies that provided you contact information and business cards. When you do contact the organization, provide them with your **name, the school you attend, the program you are in, where you met, and why you are contacting them**. Be sure to provide them with your own **contact information** at the end of the follow-up.

- If providing an **e-mail address**, make sure it is a **professional** one, such as smithj@mcmaster.ca – angelstar@hotmail.com will not suffice!
- Invite the individual to **connect on LinkedIn** with a **personalized invite message**. Look for opportunities to **develop and maintain the connection**.

BUILD YOUR CAREER SKILLS

- Career centres and the Student Success Centre on-campus talks covering topics like “Career Planning”, “Resume Writing”, and “Mock Interview Roundtable. These workshops will give you that edge over the competition and will allow you to hone your job search skills.
- Keep up to date with OSCARplus (<https://www.oscarplumcmaster.ca/>) about on-campus recruiting sessions that give you face time with employers during the whole year.