

HOW TO PREPARE FOR CAREER FAIRS

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McGill

CaPS

Career Planning Service
Service de planification de carrière

CAREER FAIRS

Career fairs are great opportunities to meet employers, learn more about their organization and hiring practices, and find out about their training programs. So whether you are graduating this year or just starting your first semester at McGill, now is the best time to start participating in career fairs. It's never too early to build your network!

From a job search perspective, one of the best things about a career fair is that a lot of the work has been done for you. Employers have already been identified, contacted and are keen to meet potential employees. They are aware that many students will be attending to explore options and to learn more about what the company does.

Upcoming McGill career fairs: www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/services/careerfairs

Tips to help you make the most of a career fair:

Before the fair

- Research the organizations that will be attending:
 - What do they do?
 - What are they looking for?
 - What jobs are posted?
 - Are you interested?
 - Are you qualified?
- Use LinkedIn to see if you have any connections to the company already, or if any McGill alumni currently work there
- Update your CV and have it professionally reviewed. Keep it general enough so it appeals to the range of employers who will be attending. You can send them a tailored version of your CV after you've spoken with them (a great way to follow-up!).
- Think about what you would like to communicate to them. Prepare a brief description of your education, skills, experiences, and motivations.

Sample Statements

My name is Henry Gonzales and I'm a second year computer science student. I've done a few programming projects during my degree and have also participated in student-run competitions. I've really developed my programming skills in Python and Javascript, and know those are skills you're looking for in your future interns. Can you tell me more about the projects your interns get to work on?

Good afternoon. I'm Lucille Jean and I'm currently majoring in political science, with a minor in philosophy. I'm hoping to go on to graduate school, either in public policy or law. I researched your firm and noticed there are McGill alumni working there who have both these types of degrees. Can you tell me a little bit about what they do? And perhaps the different type of work they get involved in, depending on the degree they have? I'm very interested in both paths!

- Brainstorm questions you would like to ask them about the organization, the recruiting process, the position they've posted, potential internship opportunities, mentoring, etc...

Sample Questions to Ask Employers

- What skills and characteristics would the ideal candidate need to obtain a position within your company?
- What types of positions do you have trouble filling? Why?
- Are graduate degrees important to advancing within your organization? Which ones?
- What advice do you have for a new graduate entering this field?
- How long does the hiring/recruitment process take? What does it usually consist of?
- What is a typical day for someone in XYZ department/position?
- Are there internship or co-op opportunities in this field?
- Are there individuals in your organization who might be willing to discuss their careers in more detail with me?
- What kinds of experience are particularly relevant when being considered for employment?
- What types of career development opportunities does your organization/department offer its employees?

During the fair

- Dress professionally, even if it's a virtual career fair! In general, it is recommended that you dress as if you are going to a job interview.
- If you are attending your first in-person career fair, it can be helpful to take a brief walk around to see the layout and plan your approach. Get a sense of the atmosphere and give yourself a chance to breathe!
- When greeting an employer, smile, make eye contact and introduce yourself
- Share information about your background and interest in the company
- Be curious. Ask open-ended questions and remember that the company representatives who attend career fairs are happy to talk!
- Listen attentively to their answers!
- Be mindful of the amount of time you spend with each employer
- Take the time to talk to employers you may know little about and see what you discover
- Ask for their contact information and if you can connect with them on LinkedIn

After the fair

Reach out to the employers you met. Take the opportunity to thank them for their time, mention something you learned from the conversation and any action items you may have discussed. For instance, if they asked you to complete additional steps like applying online, make sure to complete those steps in a timely manner and follow up on it.

In addition, you can send a LinkedIn invitation to the representatives you spoke with. When you invite them to connect, add a personal note that mentions the context of your meeting.

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