

# Job Shadow Guide for Hosts



## Overview

Job shadowing is an opportunity for students to learn more about a professional role, organization, or industry by spending a short amount of time with someone in their work environment. This learning experience allows them to see first-hand the skills utilized by an experienced professional and to ask questions aligned with their learning goals. This career exploration technique can provide valuable insights that will inform the next steps of their career development. A job shadow typically lasts one day but can be flexible depending on what you and the student decide works best for you both (e.g., in person or virtual, a few hours or a few days, agreed upon activities, etc.).

## Objective and Benefits

The objective of a job shadow is to enable students to explore a career path by gaining valuable career insights from experienced professionals. Hosting a student for a job shadow is an opportunity to share your expertise and help budding professionals start their careers by providing experiential opportunities that make a significant difference in the lives of motivated McGill students. Hosts also benefit from the chance to showcase their organization, industry, or sector, and to recruit from McGill's student talent.

## Job Shadow Host Commitment

Once a student has contacted you and you've arranged a date, they may share interests and related learning goals with you, as well as suggested activities. Below are some guidelines and practical tips to help you host a successful job shadow.

### **Prior to the job shadow:**

- Contact the student directly regarding any additional information prior to the job shadow day
  - E.g., for in-person: directions, meeting place, arrival/departure time, required attire, safety precautions if shadowing will be in an environment with risk (e.g., heavy machinery, hazardous materials, etc.)
  - E.g., for virtual: meeting links, relevant organizational information, etc.
- Verify if the student must sign any sort of confidentiality or liability waiver by contacting your Human Resources department. If so, advise the student prior to the job shadow day.
- Provide the student with a tentative schedule ahead of time.
- Check in with colleagues if they would be available to meet with the student on the day of the job shadow for a brief informational chat (optional but helpful, if the student wishes to do so).
- Advise the student by email and/or phone if you will no longer be able to host the student. Confirm if an alternate date works or if you are open to brief in-person, phone, or online chat.

**During the job shadow:**

- Give the student a tour of the workplace (if in-person), a comprehensive review of your role, and an overview of the workplace structure.
- Share your professional experiences – information on your role, skills used, career path, etc.
- Allow the student to observe and work with you as you choose (see suggested activities below).
- Inform the student of any important details regarding the workplace (i.e., if in-person: restroom location, timing/location of breaks, etc.).
- Ensure a safe and comfortable learning environment for the student.

**Following the job shadow:**

- Check with the student if there is a Job Shadow Experience Feedback survey to complete (and/or submission of an email with your reflection of the experience to a Job Shadow Program Coordinator – this may vary by student).

## Potential Activities

Students who contact you for a job shadow may share in advance what they are hoping to learn, as well as some suggested activities. Below are some examples of activities you may organize for a job shadow.

- Meet with the student individually to explain your role in detail, as well as how it fits into the bigger picture within your organization.
- Allow the student to shadow you for the day, participating in activities which may include but are not limited to meeting with clients, attending meetings, reviewing projects, listening in on phone calls, answering emails, etc.
- Set up a meeting for the student with a colleague who has a different role in your organization.
- Assign a 'mock project' which reflects a task you would work on and review it with the student at the end of the day.
- At the end of the day, debrief with the student so that they can provide feedback and reflect on their experience.

## Practical Tips

- Provide directions on how to access your workplace by public transportation.
- Inform the student on preferred workplace attire, including footwear (business casual, casual).
- Provide a full office tour, identifying locations of the bathroom, lunchroom, coffee, water, etc.
- Advise the student if they should bring their own water/coffee container and inform them in advance about what the options are for lunch (i.e., if they can bring their lunch and eat with you, purchase lunch at the work cafeteria or eat out with you).
- If the student attends any meetings, introduce them at the beginning, and ask each participant to introduce themselves and their role. Provide background information prior to any meetings.
- Get to know your student: ask about their courses, major or research, and career aspirations.

*\*We would like to thank the [McGill Alumni Relations Office](#) for consenting to the adaptation of their Job Shadow Guide for Hosts, from which numerous pieces of advice were included here.*