

Informational Interview Guide

Follow these steps to succeed in an informational interview

WHAT IS IT?

- It is not a job interview, and the main intent is not to find job openings
- Get firsthand information about the realities of working in a particular field, industry or position
- Discover career paths you didn't know existed
- Learn how to prepare for an approach a particular field
- May result in other job leads
- Learn what it's like to work at a specific organization
- Gain knowledge that can help you in writing your resume, interviewing and more
- Initiate a professional relationship and expand your network of contacts in a specific career field
- Meet people who may forward job leads to you in the future

SETTING UP THE INTERVIEW

IDENTIFY AN AREA OF INTEREST: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

- What can I do with a degree/major in ____?
- What do I need to enter a given career/ position/ organization?
- Where are the jobs? How competitive is a given industry?

IDENTIFY PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW

- Explore your network. You may already have family, friends and others who may have relevant experience. If not, these connections may lead you to others who are.
- Connect with the TRU Alumni; graduates will often take an interest in younger students and share their experience. Utilize the LinkedIn Alumni page to make relevant connections
- Call or email organizations directly and review company websites for people within a particular area of interest
- Contact professional or trade associations
- Attend on campus networking events hosted through TRU Career and Experiential Learning

INITIATING CONTACT

- Contact by phone or email
- Reference how you got their name and that you're a student
- Emphasize you are looking for information, not a job
- Ask for a convenient time to talk in person or over the phone for 10-20 minutes



Offering to buy them coffee can help sweeten the deal!

EXAMPLE:

Hi there, my name is Eva Sterling, and I am a student at Thompson Rivers University. I spoke to you briefly at the career mentoring session a couple of weeks ago. I am going into my second year, so I'm not looking for work yet, but I'm becoming more interested in this area, specifically the work you're doing with your company. I want to find out as much as I can. Would it be possible to schedule 10-20 minutes with you at your convenience to learn more about how you entered this field?

For more support, book an appointment with Career & Experiential Learning at tru.ca/cel

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CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

- Don't waste their time. Research the interviewee's company ahead of time so you're not asking for information that you can find online
- Be direct with your questions and show interest in their answers. You'll likely get more information if you minimize your own details and focus on their story
- Dress professionally and present yourself as you would in a job interview
- Have questions prepared: what do you want to know about this person, company, industry or occupation?
- Take notes during the interview

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS

PRE- REQUISITES/ EDUCATION

- How did you get started in this work? How did you get to where you are now?
- What are some ways a student could enhance their employability before completing school?
- What are the educational requirements for this job? What other types of training are required?
- How well did your university experience prepare you for this work?
- How important are grades/ GPA for obtaining employment in this field?

OCCUPATION/ COMPANY INFORMATION

- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging?
- What is the employment outlook in this field? Is the demand for people changing? In what ways?
- What is an essential thing someone planning to enter this career should know?
- What are the various jobs available in this field? What are the typical entry-level positions?
- In what ways is this industry changing? How is the economy/ technology affecting this industry?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- Who else would you suggest I speak with?
- If I have additional questions, may I contact you? (If yes), what would be the best form of communication?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Is there specific advice you would offer an international student in their work search?
- Have you noticed companies in this industry that have hired international students in the past?
- Knowing it is more difficult to secure work as an international student, are there activities I should do now to improve my career opportunities?
- How can I leverage my education, experiences and international experience for employment opportunities?

FOLLOW UP!

- At the end of the meeting, verbally thank them for taking the time to offer advice and career information
- Follow-up with a handwritten thank you card
- Email an update, or words of thank you, as appropriate
- It is a nice touch to let them know when you have secured work again, thanking them for their role in the process



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