

CAREER BUILDING IN UNIVERSITY

Working on your career is not just for soon-to-be graduates

Each semester your knowledge, abilities and interest expand and adjust. Don't confuse choosing a major or completing a degree with choosing a career. Exploring occupational and career alternatives throughout your time at university helps you graduate with better academic choices, work experiences and network to launch your career and find success, whatever that means to you.

Whether you know what work you want to do after you complete university, or don't yet have a clear idea, it's important to start non-academic career building activities today. Taking a few small steps each semester means fewer steps and a less stressful process closer to graduation. Intentionally taking charge of career building activities increases your career potential.

Career Services can help!

Certified Career Development Professionals are able to help you identify and participate in activities that are rewarding and valuable to your future employment – whether you know what that is or are still working it out.

Use this checklist to find out what career building steps you still need to take.

1.	I have a written list of my contributions at each job I have had and volunteer projects I have participated in.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have a professional email address and phone message, know how to dress professionally, and consider what prospective employers will find when searching my online activity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I know what small steps I will take this year to move me towards post graduation work and have included time in my calendar to implement these steps.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I know what resources I can use to do background research on occupations and career paths in my areas of interest as well as on companies and industry developments.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	I have started creating a professional portfolio that demonstrates career related capabilities I have developed in classes, volunteering or at jobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	I compare skill levels and qualifications for work I am interested in with my current competencies and know what 'competency gaps' I have yet to fill beyond what will be provided by my program.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	I understand the value of consulting Career Services annually to help me plan proactive ways to connect with employers and experiences of value from the early years to post graduation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I have a resume that describes my current levels of competence at some tasks needed in the type of work I am considering.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	I understand why networking is critical at every stage of my career and am practicing my networking skills while at university. I keep in touch with past supervisors and co-workers and maintain contact with people I am meeting at school and at employer and industry events.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	I feel prepared for interviews in my field of interest and have thoughtful answers to common questions. I know the how, when and why of proper follow-up with companies, recruiters and contacts.	<input type="checkbox"/>

While your dream career destination may be down the road, the journey towards it begins today. Like other journeys, you need to begin with the end in mind to set out in the right direction. You want the flexibility to take interesting side trips when they come up. And when faced with detours or rough roads, you want to have a map to ensure you quickly get back on track. Check off the recommendations you will take if you are in your:

First Undergraduate Year

- Commit to regularly scheduled time to use career competencies developed in class in the larger community. Start small. Begin a CAREER file.
 - » Keep interesting job ads, information on companies you'd like to work for and contact information for the many people you will be meeting in and out of class.
 - » Put into words why you chose your program. Save course outlines, track classes and assignments you enjoyed and why they were enjoyable. Connect assignments, papers and project to possible career interests and job tasks from job descriptions collected.
- Consider this a year of discovery. Look for opportunities to attend on-campus information and speaker events, join a club, volunteer, and talk to faculty who are involved in professional associations, organizations and projects off campus in their field of expertise. This will get you in the habit of networking and will help you make better academic and career choices.
- Learn what Career Services can do to help you with next steps – online and in person. Ensure you can access the job bank for part-time, summer and full-time jobs. Inquire about Co-operative Education. Book an appointment to learn about other formal or informal work experience possibilities.
- Update your resume before the end of the first semester and submit it to Career Services for a critique to keep you competitive with other University students for part-time or summer jobs, especially those more related to your career interests. Many organizations begin selecting staff for summer jobs as early as September and competition is stiff. A resume, prepared early, may save time and get results faster.
- If you plan to work while in University, think about choosing jobs that allow you to do tasks related to those in occupations you are considering or at organizations where you think you'd like to get a foot in the door. Evaluate. Is it what you expected? If not, refocus. Make note of skills you developed.
- Undecided about what career, program or major is a good fit for you? Get help exploring options. Book a one-on-one appointment with a certified professional at Career Services.
- Use career fairs and other employer events on campus and in the community to speak with representatives about how you can contribute AND get experience relating to career interests or future client groups. Identify and connect with people in companies that offer summer positions. Many companies do initial interviewing between January and March – some right at these events!
 - » To make the most of fairs, see the **Fairs + Employer Events** tip sheet available at Career Services in A200 Kerby Hall and online at mru.ca/careerservices/tipsheets.
- During the winter holiday break, begin your summer job search. Apply directly to companies, conduct information interviews and speak to prospective employers even if no jobs are posted. Be sure to have a system in place to follow up on applications you have made. It's not too early to start.



Middle Undergraduate Years

- Identify occupations you are considering. Research typical on-the-job tasks, career paths and stepping stones for each. What experiences beyond a degree or coursework are valued in the fields you are considering? How does the occupation differ in different industries?
 - » Review your CAREER file for work samples to demonstrate what you can do and note information or competency gaps to fill. Book an appointment with Career Services for strategies to find what you need.
- Business communication skills and expectations are only developed by interacting with professionals. Talk to people who work in companies or departments of interest. Ask their view on what trends, challenges and opportunities they are seeing in their field and clarify priority hiring periods for summer or future new grad positions. This is an effective way to carry out real-time additional career research.
 - » A good way to connect with busy industry people is to schedule information interviews. This is an effective way to use your CAREER file research and career questions to become comfortable speaking with professionals in a low-risk way. Conducting at least 5 information interviews helps you gain confidence and develop industry contacts with supportive professionals long before future job interviews.
 - » For information on information interviewing, see the **Information Interviewing** tip sheet available at Career Services in A200 Kerby Hall and online at mru.ca/careerservices/tipsheets.
- Take on a leadership role in student clubs, associations or event committees to build and demonstrate involvement employers value. Experiment with different roles while building strong relationships and future references.
- Routinely read professional journals, trade publications and online news articles related to work you want to do and industries you want to break into. Become familiar with skills needed and work to be done.
- Find off-campus professional associations that are related to your field of study or area of interest. Inquire about student memberships, meetings, public information sessions, off-campus speakers and conferences where you might volunteer or attend as a guest.
- Talk about work interests with a wide range of people. Speak to friends, relatives, past and present employers about post-graduation career opportunities they may have and characteristics, behaviours and early experiences of successful hires.
- Begin building a professionally focused resume and use personalized cover letters. Get these door-opening tools critiqued to position your newly acquired abilities more effectively for the types of work or industries on which you are focusing to keep up with or get ahead of fellow students.
- Begin to build a professional online presence as employers frequently research prospective employees online. Everything you say or post will be available for others to see, and remains so for quite some time. Make sure you are sending a professional message about who you are and how you want to be perceived by future employers on all social media channels.
- If you are considering graduate or professional school, attend the Graduate School Fair and begin additional research now.
 - » See the **Considering Graduate and Professional Studies** tip sheet available at Career Services in A200 Kerby Hall and online at mru.ca/careerservices/tipsheets.



Year of Convocation

- Early in your final year, book an appointment with a Certified Career Development Professional at Career Services to identify the best new-grad job search strategy for you. Fall recruiting is common for new graduate selection and may require strategies to become more visible to companies of interest. Finding a permanent job often takes longer than expected. This one-on-one meeting can minimize the spring 'time squeeze' where final assignments and new grad competitions overlap and include strategies to become more visible to companies of interest.
- Choose one to three specific roles you will actively pursue. Become familiar with position expectations and stay on top of current events. With this information, you improve your ability to target your resume and portfolio to show relevant competencies and stay connected while completing your degree.
- Off-campus job searches are as important as speaking with employers recruiting on campus. Develop a list of 25-50 organizations where you would like to work. Identify who you know that works or has worked in these organizations that can give you some insight into culture, hiring processes and entry points for new graduates. Reach out to people in your network for referral to additional possible contacts.
 - » 80% of jobs are not advertised anywhere and people you contact in the field can bring opportunities to your attention. Follow up with them regularly to ensure you hear about unadvertised possibilities.
 - » Act promptly on information you receive. Expect many employers to interview in the first semester or early in the second semester for positions that begin much later.
- Write papers with an extra purpose in mind – to showcase your knowledge and ability in specific areas. Write well-researched, career-relevant articles for traditional and digital publications. Employers consider these as proof you can apply what you have learned.
- Establish industry contacts to meet with over the winter break. Join a professional association as a student member. Student memberships cost significantly less than memberships once you are out of school. Seek out professional mentors and advisors. Go to employer and industry events, especially off campus. Get actively involved.
- Go to on-campus career fairs and networking events. Identify and connect with companies who hire in your field. Many employers complete preliminary screening early in the year for summer and graduate positions. Make sure you come prepared to discuss your interests and competencies as well as with questions.
- Practice showing your portfolio to friends and family who are and are not in your field as you may be interviewed by non-industry people (such as HR), or be expected to present to potential future clients. Learn how to tell why you did what you did, what the concept or problem was and how you solved it.
- If you have questions or concerns about the interview process, practices, or preparation of answers to common questions, call Career Services and arrange an interview preparation appointment.
- Consult with Career Services staff as needed if special situations arise. We are here to help! After convocation, Career Services is still available to help you leverage your Mount Royal degree or diploma for up to eight years. For a full list of Graduate Services, contact us!

CAREER SERVICES

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