

# Career Development Centre

# Informational Interviewing

## A Career Research and Job Search Tool

### What is Informational Interviewing?

Informational interviewing is a method of conducting research for the purpose of gathering accurate and up-to-date information about organizations and possible career options. Informational interviews enable you to make connections with people who may be in positions of interest to provide you with relevant career information, suggest potential job leads or even make a referral. Conducting online research into careers and employer organizations is a great first step, but the most valuable insight comes from directly engaging with people.

### Why conduct Informational Interviews?

During an informational interview you can gather information about:

- the major advantages and disadvantages of the career field
- personal opinions and observations about day-to-day job activities
- how to get started in the field/occupation/organization
- the type of entry-level jobs available and where to find them
- accurate information regarding salaries, earning potential, career prospects

Informational interviews also provide you with a unique opportunity to:

- showcase your skills and professionalism; demonstrate your interest
- clarify expectations and requirements; observe working environments
- build your confidence in speaking with potential employers understand volunteer, summer or internship opportunities related to a career field
- learn about opportunities for advancement or lateral moves in the field
- discover the latest trends in a particular career field or industry

## **Step 1 – Research the Career Field**

Prior to contacting individuals, you need to know identify careers that you are curious about. Do your research and gather basic information about the career field and the organization. The Career Centre can assist you with your personal career planning and has a variety of resources you can access to assist you with your career research and options.

## **Step 2 – Target Organizations and Professionals**

Begin by making a list of organizations that offer the type of work you are considering and people you want to meet.

### **Finding Potential Contacts on LinkedIn**

A tip for identifying contacts is to reach out to people with whom you have something, or someone, in common. LinkedIn is an excellent tool to help with this strategy:

- Visit Wilfrid Laurier University’s LinkedIn page and Find Alumni to search for individuals in careers and at organizations of interest.
- LinkedIn will tell you if you have a mutual connection (2<sup>nd</sup> degree). Having a referral from a mutual contact can increase the likelihood of connecting. Consider reaching out to your contacts to ask for information and guidance on how to best connect.
- When reviewing alumni profiles, examine the pages and groups that individuals follow. You can direct message group members so consider joining groups of interest.

### **Other resources for finding contacts:**

- Laurier Ten Thousand Coffees Hub – [laurier.tenthousandcoffees.com](http://laurier.tenthousandcoffees.com)
- Employer/industry directories, brochures and professional associations
- Job fairs and networking events
- Professors or other professionals you know (get referrals)
- Organization websites, social media
- Strategic volunteering - becoming actively involved in organizations of interest

### **Step 3 – Initiate Contact**

Contacting someone to ask for a short **meeting** (not an interview) can be intimidating. However, if you are clear and specific about your interests, people generally want to be helpful. You are expressing interest in their chosen line of work and you are asking for

their professional guidance to assist you in making important decisions in your life. You are not asking for a job, but the opportunity to learn from a professional.

#### **How Should I Connect?**

1. Ask the person if they might have 15 minutes to meet with you (in person or online) to answer some of your questions (see sample script to follow). Provide a suggestion of a date and time for the meeting. Be flexible; remember the contact is doing **you** a favour. Make yourself available and set up a mutually-convenient time.
2. You could begin with asking if the person would be willing to answer a few questions you have about their career over email or LinkedIn. This allows for building some rapport before jumping to a bigger request like a face-to-face meeting. After you've had some preliminary questions answered electronically, you should request to meet online or in person. Your goal could be to position yourself for a face-to-face meeting as this is when you truly have the opportunity to build rapport, gain insight and make a positive impression.
3. If you receive a 'no' response to your request for an informational interview or discover that the individual you have contacted is not the right person with whom you should speak, don't give up. You can still request referral information.

---

#### **Sample #1 – For Informational Interview**

Hello (name),

(Who you are) – I am a student at Wilfrid Laurier University, and I understand you studied \_\_\_\_\_ at Laurier. I am currently conducting research on a variety of careers (or organizations) within the \_\_\_\_\_ field.

(Why you are connecting with them) – Jane Smith indicated that you have enjoyed a successful career in this field (or organization), and I am interested in learning more about potential career paths.

(What you would like to happen next) – Would it be possible to set up an appointment to meet with you for 15 minutes so I could ask you a few questions about the \_\_\_\_\_ field (or your organization)?

(Close) – Thank you for your time and consideration of my request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Anita Jobb (she/her)  
BA Candidate 20XX  
anita.jobb@email.com  
519.222.2222

---

## Sample #2 – Sample LinkedIn® Message Scripts



### A) Initial Message (character restricted)

Hello (name),

I am a current student at Wilfrid Laurier University. I am conducting research on careers in \_\_\_\_\_. I am interested in learning more about \_\_\_\_\_ and was hoping to connect with you on LinkedIn as part of this research.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request!

Anita Jobb (she/her)

### B) After your LinkedIn Invitation has been accepted by the contact

Hi (name),

Thank you for accepting my LinkedIn invitation! I am very interested in careers in \_\_\_\_\_ and was hoping to ask you a few questions about your experience in the field. Would that be okay? One of my top questions is what do you deem to be the biggest rewards and challenges of being in \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you so much for your insight – it is greatly appreciated.

Anita Jobb (she/her)

---

### **C) Following a response from your contact**

Hi (name),

(Begin with a comment regarding an answer your contact provided)

The trends you mentioned in the field and how that is impacting the sourcing of products is very interesting. I am learning a lot from your answers and I was wondering if you would be willing to meet with me in person (if relevant or online) for 15 minutes so I could ask you a few more questions about the \_\_\_\_\_ field (or your organization)?

Thank you for your time,

Anita Jobb (she/her)

---

### **Step 4 – Prepare For Your Informational Interview**

Before going to your meeting, create and review a list of questions which address issues unique to the line of work you are considering. Be sure to take them along to the meeting so you do not forget any important points.

Prepare to answer questions about yourself and reasons for your interest in this field/career/organization which demonstrate some of your research. Also have a networking/business card to leave behind following your meeting.

### **Sample Questions for Informational Interviewing**

It is helpful to think about your conversation as having two stages: The ‘information gathering stage’ and the ‘fostering a job lead’ stage:

#### **Information Gathering Stage Questions:**

These questions are about building rapport with your contact and showing genuine interest in their career and organization. You should prepare your own relevant questions based on your research. However, here are some suggested questions to get you started:

- How did you decide to get into this field?
- What qualifications/education/training are required to get into this field?
- What would a typical day/week look like for you?
- What do you like best about this line of work/organization?
- What are some of the frustrations/difficulties you experience?

- What do you feel are the most important skills, interests and attitudes that would make a person satisfied with and/or successful in this job?
- What do you feel is the best training route leading to this position?
- Are there similar or related occupations that require less/different training?
- What do you see as future trends for this occupation?
- What work/volunteer experience would benefit me in targeting this career area?
- Are there any professional associations I should join? Which would you recommend?
- What were some of the best decisions that you made as a student with respect to your professional life?

### **Fostering Job Lead Questions:**

After you feel you have built rapport with your contact and gathered some solid insight into their career and organization, here are some possible questions:

- What are you looking for in an entry-level candidate?
- Express a quick summary of your background, then ask: Could you make any suggestions on what I could do to improve my job prospects?
- If I were to apply to your organization in the future, what could I do to increase my competitiveness?
- If you discover they are not hiring right now: May I send along my resumé to you after our chat in hopes that you might keep me in mind when/if an opportunity arises with department X/organization X in the future?

### **Should you bring a resumé to an Informational Interview?**

Some experts say 'Yes' because it shows you are prepared for any outcome. Others say 'No' because you have told your contact that you are coming for information/research, not to apply for a job. If you are interested in working for the organization in the future, you could take a resumé and request feedback. If you are asked for a resumé, you could say that you would be pleased to send one after incorporating their valuable insight.

### **Step 5 – Conduct the Informational Interview**

- Confirm the meeting 24 hours in advance. Arrive at least 10 minutes early.
- Dress/conduct yourself professionally as if you were at an actual job interview.

- Do not overstay your welcome. If you agreed to 15 - 30 minutes, track the time, indicate when the agreed-upon time has passed and be prepared to leave.
- This is **your** interview to lead – initiate the questions and facilitate the discussion.
- Thank the person for their time and ask if they can suggest anyone else in the field with whom you could meet to acquire other perspectives.

### **Step 6 – Follow Up After the Informational Interview**

- Always send a brief thank-you message to your contact(s) thanking them for their time and the information they were able to provide. Mention something you learned or found interesting about the meeting.
  - If during the course of your meeting you became aware of a suitable opening or opportunity, indicate your interest in being considered for that position.
  - Always ask the person if you may contact them again once you have made your career decision and begin an active job search. If the response is positive, be sure to reconnect every so often to give an update and seek additional information.
  - Keep track with whom you have met so that you can refer back to your notes in the future and identify action steps in your career development.
- 

### **Sample Follow-Up Message:**

Dear (name),

Thank you once again for taking the time to meet with me yesterday to discuss a career in \_\_\_\_\_. I found our meeting really insightful and it has given me a lot of great leads for research.

I will most definitely subscribe to the newsletter you recommended – thank you!

Sincerely,

Anita (she/her)

---

### **Tracking Your Connections**

It is important to track the timing of your initial requests for an informational interview and take notes for effective follow through. If you do not receive a response from a contact right away, you could follow up 1 - 2 weeks after your initial request citing your

original message and express continued interest in the possibility of connecting with them. Tracking might look something like this sample chart.

<b>Name of Contact</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Date of Message</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Date of Message</b>	<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Date of Follow up</b>	<b>Notes from Conversation</b>
Nancy Campbell, Marketing Manager AGM Group	Feb. 4 – LI message	Feb. 20	March 6	March 7	suggested speaking with Mandeep Singh in Y department
Eloise Santos, PR XYZ Inc.	Feb. 5 - phone	Not needed	March 9	March 10	discussed joining the municipal youth committee

**If you require assistance, please contact us:**

Waterloo, Kitchener, Toronto, Milton: 548-889-3254 | [careercentre@wlu.ca](mailto:careercentre@wlu.ca)  
 Brantford: 548-889-3255 | [careerbrantford@wlu.ca](mailto:careerbrantford@wlu.ca)

**This document is available in an alternate or conversion-ready format.**

[students.wlu.ca/career](https://students.wlu.ca/career)