

How to Get the Most Out of a Career Fair

by Debbie Mundell



As you explore careers, seek employment or investigate further education options, Career Fairs are great resources – regardless of your year, major, or career direction. Here are some tips & tricks to getting the most out of these events.

By attending a career fair you can:

- Learn what's going on in the world of work
- Explore career paths and fields
- Meet representatives from a range of organizations and industries
- Gain experience speaking with professionals in your desired industry
- Learn what positions are available, and submit your resume to recruiters
- Develop your network of contacts

Tips for Getting the Most out of the Fair

- **Research before you go.** Check out the exhibitors who are attending, and look at the websites of those you're interested in.
- Career fairs are like interviews, so make sure you're **dressed professionally.**
- **Bring resumes.** Some exhibitors will direct you to apply online, but some may be accepting resumes on the spot. Take a briefcase or a tidy bag to hold your resumes and any company literature you pick up.

- If it's an employer (rather than an educator), think about your strengths, your goals, the organization and where you would like to work within the company. Avoid starting the conversation with, "I'm doing a degree in X, do you hire for that?" Instead, **prepare a brief pitch** so that you can summarize your skills (along with your degree) and promote yourself relevantly to potential employers.
- **Prepare questions** (e.g. what is the culture of the organization/school like?). You can learn more about exhibitors by meeting with them and asking smart questions than you can from their website.
- **Show initiative by shaking hands, making eye contact, and introducing yourself to recruiters** when you reach the table. Be genuine and demonstrate interest in their organization/school and their opportunities.
- **Explore all the options.** Usually a wide variety of sectors and fields are represented at a Career Fair – this is your opportunity to browse and find out what types of opportunities are out there. Try to avoid making assumptions based on what you think you know about them (i.e. banks only hire Commerce students). Organizations at our fairs recruit students from a variety of disciplines.
- **Collect business cards**, so you have contact information for people you have spoken with.
- **Send a brief follow up thank you note** or email to the representatives you met at the fair. This is a great way to show your interest in them and what they do.

Exploring Further Education

Students who are attending a Career Fair to explore further education options can use this opportunity to connect face-to-face with representatives from a wide range of programs who can provide the latest information on admission requirements, funding and research opportunities, and other key information. Applying to a professional or post-graduate program involves a number of considerations; finding out more about your options is an important step.

To make the most of your participation, look at the list of participants ahead of time. Make your own list of the schools that interest you, visit their websites, and read their program descriptions.

Whether you're job searching or exploring further education opportunities, taking time to attend Career Fairs will give you the opportunity to meet with representatives that you might not be able to connect with in any other way!

Debbie Mundell is the Career Information Coordinator for Career Services at Queen's.

Questions to ask employers at the fair

What is it like to work in your organization or in "x" role?

What would be important for a new graduate in this field to have (skills, experience)?

What changes and trends are you seeing in your workplace and field?

Questions to ask educators at the fair

What is the focus of your program? What are some research interests of your faculty?

What resources are available to help students launch their careers after graduation?

Where are your graduates working now?

Do you offer internships or work experience as part of your program?

Is it possible to work full-time and complete the degree as a part-time student?

What types of financial aid (fellowships, assistantships, scholarships, loans) are available?

Could you tell me about student life on campus? (student organizations, housing, support groups, diversity of students)

What criteria do you consider when looking at applications for your program?

CAREER SERVICES EVENTS 2016/17

CAREER FAIR

September 27, 2016

10:30am - 3:30pm

The ARC

Don't miss the biggest career event of the year! Network with employers, explore further education both in Canada and abroad, get a LinkedIn photo taken, and more.

ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY FAIRS

October 18 & 19, 2016

January 25, 2017

10:30am - 3:30pm

Grant Hall

SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES FAIR

January 24, 2017

10:30am - 3:30pm

The ARC

Stop by the Resume Clinics, Drop-in Career Advising and Student Prep Areas at all our major events.

MAJORS NIGHT

For ArtSci Students

March 1, 2017

4 - 7pm

Grant Hall

Trying to pick a major?

Come speak to advisors and talk to current Arts and Science students.