

# Career and Job Search Support for International Students

In this tipsheet, you will learn:

- How to prepare for your job search in Canada.
- What qualities and skills will help you stand out to Canadian employers.
- Career and job search resources available to international students at Queen's.

You may have questions about the information in this tipsheet. We invite you to make an appointment with a Career Educator and Coach for International Students, or come to Drop-In Career Advising at the QUIC. More information is available in [MyCareer portal](#) and on the [Queen's University International Centre \(QUIC\) website](#).

It's important to research how Canadian work culture norms differ from your country. Do you know:

- The difference between a resume and a CV?
- How to write and format a cover letter?
- What information NOT to include on your application?
- Canadian networking and interview etiquette?
- How to distinguish between a job scam and a real job posting?
- Your rights as a job seeker and employee in Canada?
- Immigration regulations regarding working in Canada?

## Job Search and Networking: The Hidden Job Market

Whether you've had a job in a different country in the past or you are starting your job search for the first time, it's important to understand how you can find available jobs in Canada. Many students report having applied for dozens of jobs and never hearing back from employers. There may be multiple reasons for this – some of them can be avoided by following advice in the list below:

- Before you start your job search, get your resume reviewed by Career Services to make sure it meets expectations of Canadian employers.
- Learn how to write effective cover letters, and don't forget to pay close attention to formatting and spelling.

- Networking is a more effective strategy than mass-emailing resumes, as most jobs in Canada are filled through networking and referrals rather than job applications.
- Do your research and target specific employers, rather than submitting the same resume to multiple job postings.
- Start your job search early, and do not get discouraged if you do not find something right away – it takes time.
- Remember to always tailor your resume and cover letter to the position and follow the application instructions.
- Be realistic: do you have the qualifications the employer is looking for?
- Canadian employers value transferrable skills; learn how to articulate yours and remember to provide specific examples of how you have used those skills in the past.

While most people look for job postings on company websites, LinkedIn or Indeed, majority of jobs in Canada are filled by referral or through networking – in fact, some of these jobs never get posted (something that is known as the “hidden job market”). It’s never too early to start building your professional network, even if you are new to Canada and don’t know many people. Some examples of networks you could access include classmates, instructors, teaching assistants, colleagues from part-time jobs or volunteer roles, student clubs, sports teams, religious and cultural groups, etc. In addition, we offer [workshops](#) and resources such as [Career Prep Modules in OnQ](#) where you can find more information.

Networking might have a different meaning depending on the cultural context. In Canada, employers and professionals are open to conversations about career-related topics – what is known as an informational interview or a “coffee chat”. It is common to message professionals on LinkedIn and ask for a 15–20-minute conversation in order to learn more about the industry, job market, etc. These messages need to be tailored to the person you are contacting and the reason you are reaching out. To learn more about using LinkedIn for networking and job search, we encourage you to discuss this topic with a Career Coach, attend our workshops, or look at resources on our website.

## **Work Culture**

It’s important to be aware of the cultural context in which you will be working. While many employers in Canada may engage in casual conversations and invite you to call them by their first name, they still expect professionalism from a potential employee. This may be different from a culture you are used to, but it is a skill you can practice. Join [Career Services workshops](#) and [English Language Conversation Circle](#) at the QUIC to improve your professional conversation skills.

## Building Experience

Canadian employers value transferrable skills, and often expect that students engage in experiences outside of the classroom, such as volunteering, student clubs, sports, community engagement, research & lab work, competitions, conferences, personal projects, and part-time jobs.

However, it is not enough to simply engage in those activities. What will make you successful in the job search process is being able to articulate what skills you have gained as a result and connect them to the requirements of the job that you are applying to – this process is known as tailoring your application. Using [Skills Cards](#) can help you identify and talk about your skills.

If you speak English as an additional language, additional supports are available through [Queen's University International Centre \(QUIC\)](#), Career Services, and [Student Academic Support Services \(SASS\)](#).

## Resume, Cover Letter, and CV (Curriculum Vitae)

In Canada, resumes are 1–2-page documents summarizing a person's professional work history and skills that are used to apply for jobs. In contrast, CVs are used for academic and research applications, tend to focus on academic accomplishments, and can be multiple pages long.

Most employers will expect that job applicants submit a cover letter as part of their job application, where they will focus on describing a maximum of 3 skills in-depth, connecting them to the job's requirements. Cover letters are one page long and are formatted as business communication documents.

You can find examples of resumes and cover letters in acceptable format in our [Queen's Best Interview, Resume, and Cover Letter Highlights magazine](#). As a rule, job application documents should not include any personal information such as age, gender, marital status, or include photos or copies of immigration documents.

## Interview

Canadian employers use interviews to assess the applicant's interpersonal and communication skills. While interviews are a formal interaction and you are expected to act professionally, don't be surprised if an employer engages in casual conversations before or after the interview, also known as "small talk". You can practice your interview skills by booking an appointment with a Career Educator and Coach (a process that is sometimes referred to as "mock interview").

## Cross-Cultural Considerations

It's important to reflect how the job search process in Canada differs across cultures. You may be used to a different style of interviews, or not know what the employers expect. Think about how your cultural expectations may differ from those of an employer: for example, in Canada it is common to hold eye contact, smile, and shake hands when meeting a potential employer for an interview. This may be different from what you are used to or prefer to do, so take some time to consider how you will greet an interviewer. If you are unsure what to do, book an appointment to discuss with Career Educator & Coach.

## Your Rights

As a job seeker and an employee, you have rights and responsibilities. It is recommended that you familiarize yourself with them.

- Employment Standards Act Ontario: [Your guide to the Employment Standards Act | ontario.ca](#)
- Ontario Workplace Safety: [Home | WSIB](#)

## Available Supports

Our Career Educator & Coach for International Students can support you whether you are looking for a job, considering further education, or making career decisions:

- **Drop-in Advising** is offered in-person and via Zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM EST. Please refer to the [QUIC Events Calendar](#) for details, including the Zoom link.
- **Individual 30-minute appointments** are held both at QUIC and at Career Services (Gordon Hall, 3rd floor) and can be booked through [QUIC Booking Page](#) or [MyCareer](#) portal.
- **Career Services workshops and events** are open to all students. Use the [MyCareer to view various offerings and to register](#).

For any questions regarding immigration regulations, including working with a study permit, please consult [International Student Advisors at QUIC](#).