



# CAREER MENTOR PROGRAM

## HANDBOOK FOR STUDENTS

CONVERSATIONS | CONNECTIONS | CONFIDENCE

- Receive advice and information to support your career choices.
- Gain a realistic snapshot of occupations and fields of interest.
- Get inspired and ignite your career!



**University  
of Manitoba**

**Career Services**

# Career Mentor Program Student Handbook

The Career Mentor Program (CMP) is designed to help students explore occupations. We connect you with industry professionals (mentors), so you can:

- Conduct an informational interview to learn about an occupation from the experience of a mentor.
- Formulate realistic career goals and decide if an area of work is a good fit for you.
- Gain confidence in your career decisions and informational interviewing skills.
- Form valuable networks.

## A. How does the Career Mentor Program Work?

CMP is an informational interviewing program that supports students in gathering the occupational information needed to support career decision-making and planning for the future. The program orientation is intended to help students feel ready to meet with a career mentor. Once students are matched with a mentor, the student is responsible for contacting the mentor to arrange a meeting time, attending the meeting, conducting the informational interview, and completing a program evaluation. CMP staff guide students through the process and provide support as needed.

### Career Mentor Program Process

#### Step 1: Attend an orientation session

**Next:** CMP staff match you with a mentor (after CMP Orientation)

Matching students to mentors can be complex. Our program database has over 700 mentor volunteers. If we do not have a mentor in the field you have requested, we will try to find a suitable match. We contact the mentor in advance to confirm their availability to meet with students during a given term. Once they have agreed, we will contact you. If you do not receive an update within two weeks, please contact us.

#### Step 2: Contact your mentor

Once you receive your mentor's contact information, **contact the mentor within 1 week** to set up a mutually agreeable time to meet. They are expecting you to contact them. ***If you cannot fulfill your commitment to meet with your mentor, PLEASE contact us immediately.***

Emailing or phoning your mentor is most appropriate; do not text unless CMP staff or the mentor have indicated otherwise. Email correspondence should be proofread and sent from an appropriate e-mail address. We recommend using your UM e-mail address. When introducing yourself, include your degree program and year of study, availability for a meeting, and a brief overview of what you are hoping to learn from them.

## Sample Email to Mentor

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

*I hope this message finds you well. I am registered with the University of Manitoba Career Mentor Program. Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me.*

*I am currently completing my (degree program), and I am interested in learning more about \_\_\_\_\_.*

*I would like to set up a meeting time and am wondering what dates would work best for you. I am generally available (days of the week, times of day) / available during the week of (date) to (date).*

*Please let me know when you would prefer to meet.*

*I look forward to hearing from you. Have a great day,*

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If you would like us **to review or assist you in drafting your email**, please email [cmp@umanitoba.ca](mailto:cmp@umanitoba.ca), call 204-474-8667 or visit us at 474 University Centre.

### **Step 3: Research the mentor's occupation, industry, and organization**

Research prepares you for your mentor meeting and focuses your questions. Use Career Service's Exploring Occupations Library to research your mentor's field: [umanitoba.ca/careerservices/career-planning/explore-occupations](http://umanitoba.ca/careerservices/career-planning/explore-occupations). When researching, aim to develop an understanding of common job duties, general employment requirements, and basic labour market information (salary and job outlook). If your mentor's occupation is not listed within the online library, please start your own research using resources recommended by Career Services. Another important area to research is the organization where the mentor works, providing insight into the type of work a mentor performs as well as important industry information. Additional sources to review: the organization's website, the mentor's LinkedIn profile, recent news articles or journal articles about the industry.

### **Step 4: Confirm the date and meeting details 1-2 days in advance of meeting**

A day or two in advance of you setting a meeting date, e-mail the mentor to confirm the date and location. Mentors are often busy and volunteering their time to meet with you. It can be helpful to them and for yourself to confirm details, especially when the meeting time was set weeks in advance. At this time, you might also wish to prepare the materials for your informational interview (list of questions, a notebook, pen and directions). As a back-up you might also wish to e-mail yourself the meeting location/address, mentor's contact information, and your questions.

### **Step 5: The mentor meeting & informational interview**

The meeting takes the form of an informational interview and should take approximately an hour. Site tours or job-shadows may be possible based on your interest, occupational feasibility/practicality, and the mentor's ability and interest in providing this. It is natural to be nervous. Mentors will understand. **They have volunteered to participate with the CMP and want to talk to you.** Thank the mentor for the opportunity to meet.

### **Step 6: Thank your mentor**

Send a thank you note (by mail or e-mail) to your mentor. Career mentors are volunteers and donate their time. Please let them know what advice or information was helpful.

### **Step 7: Complete the mentee program evaluation**

Completing the mentee evaluation **confirms the meeting has taken place**. Let us know what you thought of the program and if you would like to meet another mentor / explore another occupation. If we do not receive your evaluation, we will assume that you have not met with your mentor and will then need to follow-up with both you and the mentor.

Student/Mentee Evaluation Form: [umanitoba.ca/career-services/form/cmp-evaluation-form](http://umanitoba.ca/career-services/form/cmp-evaluation-form).

## **B. Reflecting on Your Career Values**

Career values are your work motivations and needs, priorities, or preferences for job satisfaction. These may reflect anticipated likes and dislikes, past experiences, and social influences. Knowing your personal career values is important to making career decisions. Review the values defined below and reflect on which are most meaningful for your career. At your mentor meeting we recommend asking questions that reflect your values, which may also allow you to gain tailored advice from your mentor.

### **Achievement** (CS Values Card: Achievement)

Having a feeling of success, accomplishment, or personal pride from completing your work or reaching goals, while making the most of talents and abilities.

### **Social Interaction** (CS Values Cards: Public Contact, Work with Others)

Work that provides interaction with co-workers and/or the public. This value may include sharing work, getting support or encouragement from other workers or supervisors, and/or being in an environment that values social engagement.

### **Creativity** (CS Values Cards: Artistic Creativity, Innovative Thinking)

Work that provides opportunities to be innovative, original, expressive, imaginative, artistic, or creative. The creative medium can vary and may include: fine arts, music, design, literature, performing arts, languages, communication, invention, and new ideas.

### **Work Environment** (CS Values Cards: Location, Job Tranquility, Fast Pace)

Preference for a specific type of physical environment or geographical location of work. It might involve the ambiance or physical environment (preference for a modern office, working virtually, or working outdoors), a lifestyle preference (urban or rural), or living and working in a specific community or region. Moving often for work, work travel and having a range of work environments may also be preferred.

**Ethics and Morals** (CS Values Cards: Honesty & Integrity, Moral Fulfillment)

A preference for work that provides freedom for one to follow one's own personal, cultural or community principles or values.

**Financial Benefits** (CS Values Card: High Earnings)

A preference for a certain salary level and/or benefits (pension, insurance, bonuses), economic security, and/or having earnings to support lifestyle or philanthropic goals. This value might include having the opportunity to be financially rewarded for working hard, taking risks, or having initiative or special talents.

**Independence** (CS Values Cards: Time Freedom/Flexible Hours, Independence, Work Alone)

A desire to have freedom or control over how your work is done, with little or no supervision. This may involve a preference for working alone, but more importantly it reflects a need to manage yourself, or to do things your own way.

**Intellectual Stimulation** (CS Values Card: Intellectual Stimulation)

A preference for work involving a high degree of mental activity in the form of problem solving, analyzing, researching, or continuous learning.

**Work-Life Balance** (CS Values Card: Work-Life Balance)

A desire for balance or a boundary between the work and non-work elements of life and that allows for time and energy to devote to family, leisure, and community involvement.

**Management/Leadership** (CS Values Cards: Advancement, Leadership and Supervision)

Interest in advancing and moving into roles with greater responsibility. And/or wanting a role with leadership and being responsible for ensuring that the work of an organization is completed satisfactorily. This may include directing others or improving performance.

**Job Security** (CS Values Card: Security)

A preference for work in a growing field or area that is normally in steady demand, unlikely to be affected by economic changes.

**Social Recognition** (CS Values Card: Status)

A value associated with work that gives one status, prestige, influence, respect, or social approval. This recognition may be based on a prevailing social opinion that the work is considered important in our society, one's culture or the workers' personal feeling that their work is respectable or worthwhile.

**Social Service** (CS Values Cards: Help Others, Help Society)

Work that allows one to help or to provide service to others or society. The help may be offered to individuals or groups, and it may be provided directly or indirectly to those being helped. Helping Society may include activism and helping communities through policy and modes other than direct service.

### **Variety** (CS Values Card: Change & Variety)

A value associated with work that is frequently changing and different. Change may result from doing different tasks or dealing with different people.

#### **Additional Work Factors**

For each of the value descriptions below, the following sentence can be completed: “It is important for me to have a job where I can...”

- **Physical Challenge** – complete work that is physically challenging or uses my physical abilities (e.g., dexterity, strength, or speed).
- **Working Under Pressure** – be involved in work with time limitations or little margin for error.
- **Competition** – Compete to win or be compared against others
- **Personal Safety** – be involved in work with no risk or minimal risk of harm to myself or others.
- **Influencing Others** – work in a role where I can change peoples’ attitudes or opinions.
- **Structure & Predictability** – complete work that predicable, with a high level of structure or routine.
- **Adventure** – work in an exciting or risky job where I may deal with hazards or uncertainty.

## **C. Questions**

If you would like **assistance with developing questions**, feel free to ask a CMP staff member for support. Here are some guidelines to follow when considering your questions:

### **DO:**

1. **Ask open-ended questions.** Asking “Why do you like your job?” or “What do you like most about your job?” will yield a more thorough answer compared to “Do you like your job?” which may be answered with one word. Try to start questions with **What, Where, Why, How, Who**.
2. **Ask questions based on organizational and occupational research.** Advance research allows for more specific and meaningful questions. You may even reference what you’ve heard or read and ask for clarification or perspective. Career Mentors can be great myth busters and provide further insight into aspects of their job or industry.
3. **Prioritize your questions.** Time in an informational interview can pass quickly and it’s natural to think of great questions in the moment or as a follow-up to a mentor response. Keeping a list of questions will help you stay on track and maximize your time.
4. **Ask questions based on your career values.** The mentor can provide related information and share their insight into areas of the occupation or how the occupation may be a fit for you.



## **DON'T:**

1. **Ask for a job.** The purpose of this program is to gather occupational information for your career planning and to help you build confidence in your career decision-making.
2. **Ask the mentor about their personal salary.** This can be a sensitive topic, so please refrain from asking “how much do you make?”. Feel free to ask open-ended, well-thought-out questions such as “what is the typical salary range for someone working in this field?”.
3. **Ask personal questions.** Keep your questions relevant to occupation and industry. For example, if you are interested in the work-life balance relating to an occupation, ask questions such as “how many hours do you work in a week?” as opposed to “how often do you see your family?”.



## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

### **VALUES QUESTIONS**

The questions below reflect the different **career values** that you’ve been prompted to reflect upon. These questions allow the mentor to learn about you and offer individualized advice. Feel free to premise some of your questions with brief information about your career values. For example, you can say, “*Variety is important to me; how much variety do you experience in your work?*”

### **1. ACHIEVEMENT**

- What gives you a sense of accomplishment in this occupation?
- How often do you get to see the results of your work?

### **2. SOCIAL INTERACTION**

- How much of your job involves interaction with co-workers? The public?
- Is there a team approach to your work?
- What is the work atmosphere like?

### **3. CREATIVITY**

- Do you get to express individuality in your work, or do you follow strict guidelines?
- What opportunities are there to be innovative and develop new ideas?

### **4. WORK ENVIRONMENT**

- Can you describe your working conditions? Is it noisy or quiet? Are there any environmental work hazards?
- How much opportunity is there in this field to relocate? Are there equal opportunities to work in other regions?

### **5. ETHICS & MORALS**

- Under what circumstances can you refuse to do something not in tune with your beliefs?
- What opportunity is there in this field to be involved in or contribute to \_\_\_\_\_?

### **6. FINANCIAL BENEFITS**

- What is the typical salary range/ starting salary for this occupation?
- What health or pension benefits are typical in this field/organization?
- Are there financial incentives in this field for upgrading education or taking extra courses?
- Are you paid for your overtime hours?

### **7. INDEPENDENCE**

- How much time do you spend working independently?
- Do you have control over how your work is done? Or are you closely supervised?

### **8. INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION**

- What part of your job is the most mentally stimulating or challenging?
- How much learning and research do you do? Is there a lot of problem solving?
- Does your occupation take full advantage of your intellectual capabilities and education?

### **9. WORK LIFE BALANCE**

- Do you have set hours, or do they vary?
- How much vacation time is typical, and can this be taken any time of year?
- Are you ever on-call?
- Approximately how many hours do you work in an average week?
- Is travel required?



- How much flexibility are you allowed in your job in terms of dress, hours, vacation, or job location?

#### **10. MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP**

- Does your job involve supervision and leading others?
- Are you involved in setting organizational goals or determining how resources are allocated?
- How do individuals in this field move into management positions?

#### **11. JOB SECURITY**

- What are the current labour market conditions for this occupation?
- What is the future demand for this occupation?
- What changes are occurring or expected to occur in this field?
- How long do employees stay with this type of position/organization? Why do they leave?

#### **12. SOCIAL RECOGNITION**

- Do you feel respected because of the work you do?
- How are your achievements recognized?
- Is your job performance reviewed on a regular basis? How?
- What social obligations go along with your job?
- Is there a lot of public exposure?

#### **13. SOCIAL SERVICE**

- Does your work bring about social change? How?

- Do you feel that you help others?
- How does the community benefit from your work?

#### **14. VARIETY**

- Does your work involve a variety of tasks?
- Do you travel very often?
- Do you have to complete one project before starting another? Do you work on many simultaneously?

#### **15. ADDITIONAL WORK FACTORS:**

- What parts / How much of your work involves... [insert value]?
- Which elements of your work, if any, might be deemed risky or dangerous? What health and safety procedures are in place to mitigate risks?
- What unexpected surprises do you experience in your work? What is the most exciting part of your job?
- How much structure and predictability is there in your everyday work? Do you know what each workday will look in advance?

## **GETTING YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR**

- What types of activities did you participate in before entering this field? Which were most helpful? When / how did you decide on this career path?
- Could you describe a typical entry-level position in this field?
- What should I consider before deciding if this is the right career path for me?
- What does this industry look for or find most impressive in potential employees?
- Are there any professional journals or career-related literature/ organizations that would help me to learn about this field?
- Can you recommend appropriate volunteer experiences, internships or summer jobs I should consider? What recommendations do you have for gaining experience in this field while I am still in school?
- What coursework did you find most useful to prepare you for your job?
- If you could go back in time, would you do anything differently in your preparation for this occupation?
- How important is it to have the “right” degree or courses to have a chance to develop a career like yours today? What are other qualifications are considered important?
- What are the “dos and don’ts” in trying to develop a successful career in your field?
- What are the characteristics of people who usually excel in this field? What personal qualities do you need to succeed?

## **PROS AND CONS**

- What do you like most about your job? What are some challenges with this profession?
- Would you choose the same occupation again if you were just starting out? Why or why not?
- Do you have any special words of warning or encouragement because of your experience?
- Why did you enter this occupation? Was it all that you had expected it to be?
- What are some of the major stresses in your work? Do you consider this to be a low/ medium/ high stress job?

## **JOB DUTIES**

- Could you outline your primary job responsibilities and indicate the percentage of time that you devote to each?
- What job duties do you perform on a regular basis? What are some of the tasks that are less frequent?

- Have your job duties changed as you have gained more experience?

### OTHER QUESTIONS

- What other jobs or roles can you get into/pursue with the same background?
- If you had to choose another related occupation, what would it be? Why?
- Are there any other occupations that you would suggest for me to explore as an alternative to this one?
- Can you refer me to any other people inside/outside of this organization? Is there someone else I could contact for more information?
- What experiences (work-related or otherwise) have helped you succeed in your occupation?
- How is your job similar to and/or different from Occupation X? (This question can help you to compare related occupations and differentiate the professional roles.)

## D. Informational Interview Tips

Keep in mind that your career mentor may be a **future colleague or potential employer**. It is important to make a good impression.

- 1. What to wear:** When choosing attire, consider comfort and the location of the meeting. If meeting at the mentor's workplace, wear appropriate clothing and footwear. When using the informational interview to network, business casual clothes are appropriate. If meeting virtually, still ensure professional dress and that your meeting room is clean, neutral, and brightly lit.
- 2. Your questions:** Arrange questions in the order you hope to ask them and bring them to the interview.
- 3. Getting to the interview:** When meeting virtually, ensure there are no technical problems with your meeting platform or computer. Run a test 10-30 minutes beforehand. When meeting in person, arrive early. Email the address, directions, questions, and mentor contact information to yourself.
- 4. What to bring:** Mentor's phone number, questions, pen, paper, clipboard, and helpful notes from your research.
- 5. During the interview:** You can share a bit about yourself but stay focused on the mentor's job and field. Try not to ask questions that can be more easily answered by another source. Keep remarks positive. **Do not ask for a job.** That is not the purpose of the CMP and may make the mentor reluctant to see other students. **Do ask for advice about a job or volunteering in the industry.** Feel free to ask the mentor if you can stay in contact or job shadow.

6. **Be sensitive to the mentor’s availability:** They have agreed to spend an hour with you. Try to keep the interview to an hour or less. If you have additional questions that weren’t answered within that timeframe, ask if they would be willing to meet again.
7. **Pace and pausing:** To ensure that you are not interrupting the mentor, pause a couple of seconds after they have stopped speaking before asking another question. This is helpful when using virtual platforms that may have unexpected lags.
8. **Thank you note:** Following the interview, send a thank you email to the mentor and anyone else who helped you out. Let them know what was most helpful to you!

## E. Virtual Meeting Tips

- Test the technology in advance (1 day in advance + again 20 min prior to the meeting).
- Dress appropriate, arrive on-time, avoid multi-tasking. If you are taking notes, let the mentor know.
- Keep your camera on and mic muted when not speaking.
- Use a room that is tidy, bright, and neutral in colour.

## F. Other resources from Career Services

Career Services offers a comprehensive array of services and programs to assist you with career decision-making and career planning. The Career Mentor Program is just one of the available programs.

### Career Planning and Assessment

Career Consultants are available to support you at any stage of the career planning process. They can help you explore your personal characteristics (e.g., personality, work interests) and help you determine suitable occupational options. There are many formal and informal assessment tools that can also help you learn about yourself and provide occupational matching. Consultants can help you determine an appropriate educational pathway, and support you as you explore options, make decisions and plan for success.

### Career Information

There are many resources online and in-house in the Career Services centre that can help you explore occupational options or search for educational alternatives. A Career Advisor and Career Consultants are available to provide information, support and advice to students who are career undecided or seeking occupational or educational information.

### Indigenous Career Mentor Program (ICMP) & UM Café: Ten Thousand Coffees

There are many ways to connect with professionals in industry, including UM alumni. ICMP is an extension of CMP and connects indigenous students with indigenous professionals in their industry of interest. UM Café is an online networking program that

connects UM students with alumni and industry professionals for coffee chats. There are many networking and mentoring programs, both on and off-campus, and you can learn more by asking CMP staff.

### **Employment Services**

Career Services also provides employment services for students and recent UM alumni. Students can receive help with their interview preparation and job search via workshops, or individual appointments. In the Resumé Learning Centre students can receive guidance with resumé and cover letter development. The unit hosts employer info sessions and career fairs, including an annual career fair with over 100 employers held every January. Another very important resource for students is UM Connect where students can view job and volunteer postings and register for workshops and employer events.

\*You can access **UM Connect** at [umconnect.umanitoba.ca](http://umconnect.umanitoba.ca) and login using your **UM e-mail address and password**.

### **Resources**

The Career Services Centre holds many resources in-house, including:

- 250+ Occupational Files (which hold occupational information, labour market information, educational requirements and program listings, career interviews)
- Career Compasses (Academic and career success guides by major or subject)
- Career Planning Books (e.g., *175 Best Jobs Not Behind A Desk*, Michael Farr)
- University & College Directories, Professional and Graduate School Directories
- Job Search, Resume, Cover Letter & Interview Books/Guides

Visit our Career Planning and Employment Resources hub pages where you can find workbooks, links to educational and industry directories, job boards, and our online occupational library:

- [umanitoba.ca/career-services/career-planning](http://umanitoba.ca/career-services/career-planning)
- [umanitoba.ca/career-services/employment-resources-students](http://umanitoba.ca/career-services/employment-resources-students)

### **Individual Consultations**

If you would like to meet with a Career Consultant or Career Advisor, visit 474 University Centre or call to book an appointment. Sign-up for one of our many workshops on UM Connect: [umconnect.umanitoba.ca](http://umconnect.umanitoba.ca).

## **Career Mentor Program - If You Have Any Concerns...**

If you have questions at any time, feel uncomfortable with any step in the process, want support with using a virtual meeting platform, or need to book meeting space on campus, please connect with us: **204-474-8667, 474 University Centre, [cmp@umanitoba.ca](mailto:cmp@umanitoba.ca)**.

## **G. APPENDIX – Questions to Ask Your Mentor**

This worksheet may help you prepare for the informational interview with your mentor. Use it to brainstorm or note your questions. The space below each question can be used to jot tips and points from the mentor's response.

Mentor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation/Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's Organization/Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Informational Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. \_\_\_\_\_  
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