

HOW TO TALK TO STRANGERS ABOUT CAREER STUFF

May 24th, 2023

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Eden Mekonen (she/her)
Paulina Cisneros (she/her)

Career Advisors,
Centre for Career Action



Who are we?

Anika (she/her)

How Do I Locate Myself?

Black cis-woman of the African Diaspora. Born in Canada to immigrant parents.

A Little More About Me

- Deep passion for equity and social justice advocacy and uplifting student voice
- Loves singing musical theatre poorly and loudly and dressing up for Halloween!
- Some Hobbies: bad reality tv, live music and raising plant babies





Who are we?

Eden (she/her)

How Do I Locate Myself?

Black cis-woman of Ethiopian-Canadian descent and daughter of refugees. Also, of the African Diaspora!

A Little More About Me

- A big enthusiast of equity, diversity, and inclusion! Also empowering students!
- Lover of all thing's food!
- Favourite hobbies: Trying new foods, playing sports, fitness, and spending time with family and friends

Who are we?

Paulina (she/her)

How Do I Locate Myself?

Latina cis-woman, Mexican born and raised, mother, culturally Catholic, neither from here nor there

A Little More About Me

- I am all about naming, identifying and eliminating barriers to living full lives
- I love learning about AI, tech, and the intersection of that with our society
- For fun, I'm a big sport watcher. NFL, F1 are my mains and then NBA, Tennis are my seconds. Any other sport in playoff season is my dessert



Whose territory are we on?

We respectfully acknowledge that we work on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The main campus of the University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

Some incredible local community members on IG: Bangishimo Johnston @bangishimo, Amy Smoke @amysmoke, C. Elizabeth Best @lizbot5000

Support: O:se Kenhionhata:tie – Land Back Camp, @ose.kenhionhatatie on IG

Reports: TRC Calls to Action, National Inquiry Into MMIWG

Reading: 21 Things You May Not Have Known About the Indian Act, This Place: 150 Year Retold

What land are you on? : native-land.ca

Support for Indigenous Students

- Shatitsirótha' Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre (WISC)
 - Monday-Fridays 8am-8pm for student use, staff is in centre 10-3pm
 - Located at St. Paul's University College but accessible to all Indigenous students
 - Holistic supports: Elder services, tutoring, academic advocacy, peer mentorship, indigenous residency, food hampers, medicine garden, ceremonial fireground, cultural programming, feasts/gathering and more!
- Laura Belben, Indigenous Student Support Counsellor, UW Counselling Services
 - Email directly at lbelben@uwaterloo.ca or via UW Counselling Services
- Office of Indigenous Relations
 - Scholarships/bursaries, academic programming
- Indigenous Students Association (ISA) @isa.uw
 - "student run collective that supports the needs and interests of Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students on campus"
- .caISES - Canadian branch of AISES American Indian Science and Engineering Society, UW chapter
 - Goal: to support and create community for Indigenous, Metis and Inuit students in STEM

Gratitude for this knowledge shared by Robin Stadelbauer (Office of Indigenous Relations) and Jaydum Hunt (WISC)!

How might we **co-create** this safe(r) space?

- Participate in the way that feels most comfortable for you!
- Please feel free to add your pronouns to your screen name
- Please use the chat during presentation time! You can go mic on or mic off during the Q&A time.
 - Feel free to send Anika, Eden or Paulina a direct message if you have a question or comment you would like to share anonymously
- Ask questions whenever!
- If having tech issues, send a direct message to one of us
- Take what works for you, leave what doesn't.

What are you hoping to learn today?

What will we talk about today?

- Re-orienting how we talk about talking to strangers
- Things that will come up
 - Navigating spaces safely
 - Imposter phenomenon
 - Anxiety/nerves
 - Awkwardness
- Tools to get you started
- Q&A

Talking to strangers about career stuff

Aka Networking :(



It's scary! People are going to judge me!

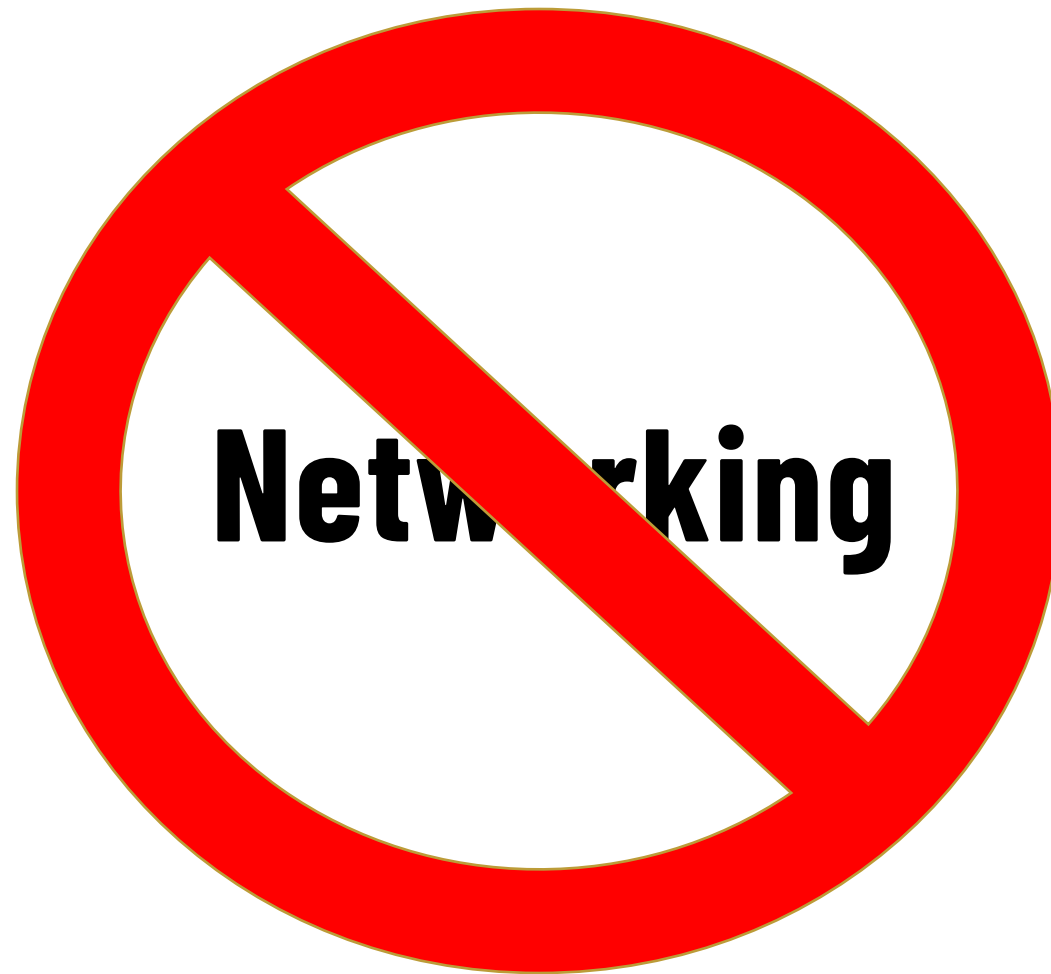
"Networking is the only way that I will be successful in my career, so I must go to networking events"

"I can only network with people in my field and talk with them about 'professional' stuff"

"It's only for extroverts"

"It feels inauthentic and fake."

**"Networking"
thoughts**



All people are potential connections (not just people in your field)

Informal! Talk about your interests, ask about theirs



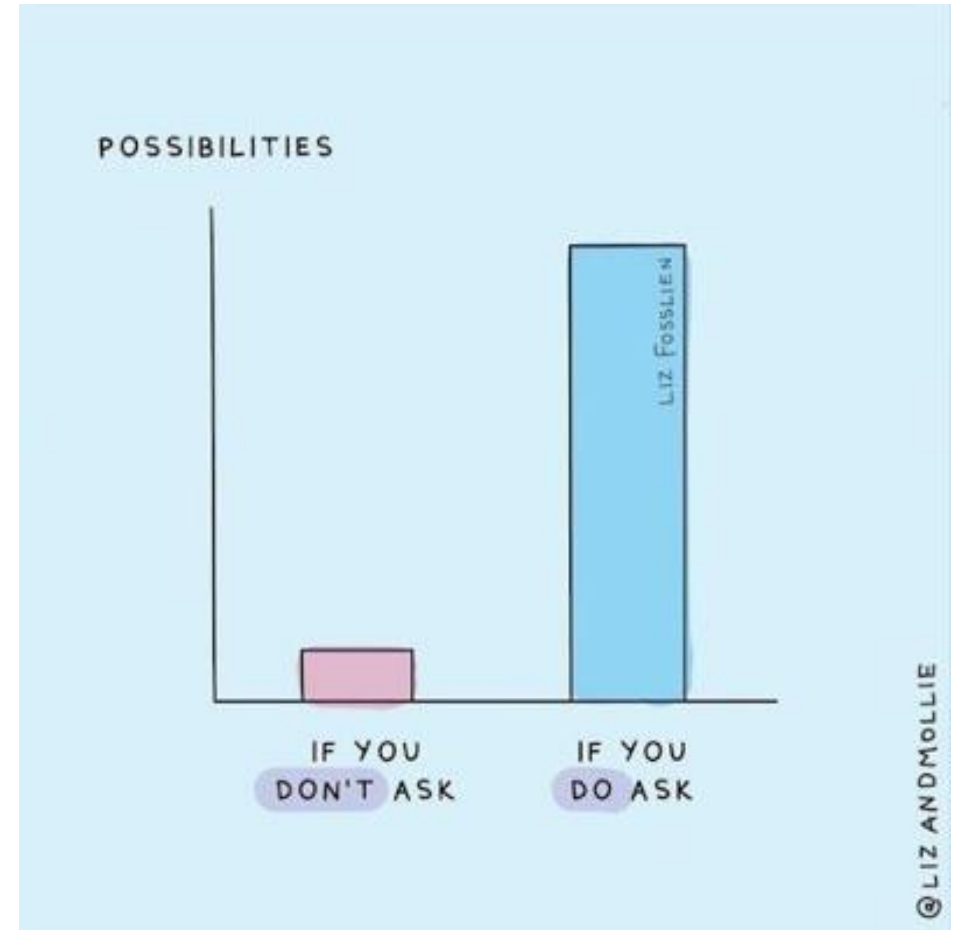
Building community and relationships

Not one size fits all – can look how you want it to look

Getting to know people as full humans

Why even connect...?

- An opportunity to learn, to consider unexpected things you may not have thought of before
- Serendipity/magic of putting yourself in a situation where you are receiving information
- Build new relationships and hear people's stories
- Figure out things you might want to consider in your career path, learn about new pathways
- Discover new tips and ways of navigating life and career



Source: [@lizandmollie](https://www.instagram.com/lizandmollie)

Why even connect...?

- It can happen with people you already speak with, just reframing conversation
- Could be with strangers...
- When it comes to talking with others there can be additional things to navigate such as:
 - Safety
 - Imposter Phenomenon
 - Anxiety/Nerves
 - Awkwardness

Determining Safety

How do you know if
a space is safe/safe
(r) for you?

Safety looks really different for everyone.

Determining Safety

Before:

- Think about what a safe space looks like for you and what your boundaries

During:

- What thoughts are coming up? What are they saying that feels uncomfortable to me?
- What feelings and sensations are coming up (if tuning into my body feels safe for me)?
- Listen to your body/instincts/thoughts



Determining Safety

During/After:

- Do I feel included, heard and listened to in this space?
- Do I feel like I can bring my full self to this space? Am I being interacted with as a whole person (not just an identity)?
- Does the person I am interacting with show me respect and give me space to engage at my comfort level?
- Are they respecting my boundaries?



Source: [@ogorchukwu](https://twitter.com/ogorchukwu)

What to do if you feel a space is unsafe

- Leave (when you feel able), end the conversation – **you do not** need to continue building a connection with this person, organization, group, etc.
- Use coping tools to move through the situation
- Talk to safer folks about it and/or write down what happened
- Seek community who may understand (e.g. elders, student groups, friends, etc.)



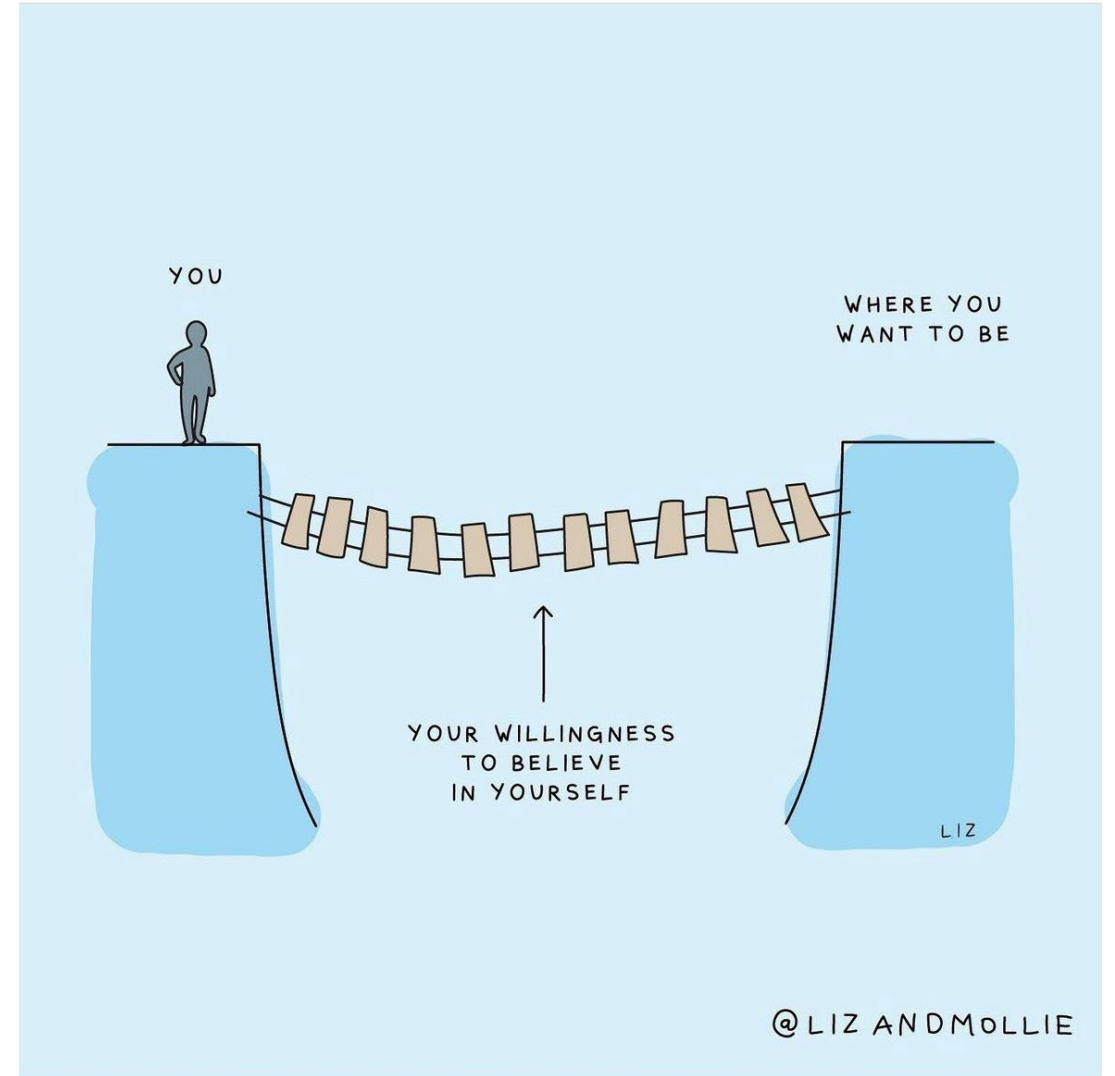
Source: [@BlessingManifesting](#)

Resources

- Connect with our **Harassment Advisors, Eden Mekonen**, eden.mekonen@uwaterloo.ca & **Graeme Beaton**, graeme.beaton@uwaterloo.ca
- **Jazz Fitzgerald, Manager, Student Equity and Community**, Student Success Office
jazz.fitzgerald@uwaterloo.ca
- Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Office (SVPRO)
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Office (EDI-R)
- Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre
- Resource: If You Are Feeling Harassed in Your Co-Op Workplace
- Embedded Wellness Counsellors
- WUSA Peer Support
 - Racial Advocacy for Inclusion, Solidarity & Equity (RAISE)
 - The Glow Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity (the Glow Centre)
 - The Women's Centre
 - Mentor Assistance Through Education and Support (MATES)

Imposter Phenomenon

- So many of us cannot shake feelings that we haven't earned our accomplishments, or that our ideas and skills aren't worthy of others' attention, that we might get caught
- This is super common – “syndrome” might not be the right term



Source: @lizandmollie

The Systemic Nature of Imposter Phenomenon

It can be structural and systemic!

- Navigating spaces that were structured to exclude (formed by white supremacy)
- This is part of the project of these institutions to make you feel this way

How can we resist?

- Naming the systemic roots of these feelings
- Taking up space
- Finding community
- Talking about it, challenging it





Source: getwerkin.com

How do we shake off imposter phenomenon-y feelings?

- Talking about this goes a long way!
- Talk to your peers and mentors
- Knowing that others feel the same way will provide some relief
- Be kind to yourself: give yourself the same pep talk you would give to a close friend
- Keep track of your positive feedback
- Remind yourself that you deserve to be here!

Anxiety/Nerves

- **Strategies**

- Affirmations (e.g. "I am capable and deserve for good things to happen")
- Grounding (5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste)
- Deep breathing techniques (e.g. birthday cake breathing)
- Visualizing (Imagine - how might this go well?)
- Apps: [MindShift](#), [Calm](#), [Woebot Health](#)

- Remember:

- Folks are generally happy to share about themselves
- They have been where you are
- It gets better!
- Some conversations will go well, and some won't . That is OK and part of the experience!



Source: [@gmf.designs](#)

Awkward Moments

- They will happen
- They have happened to everyone
- When they happen, it's OK! Laugh, apologize, or discuss it as appropriate
- Once you start speaking, you'll find that it's less awkward
- Being vulnerable allows for moments of human connection
- If you have a tech issue, that's OK too
 - Part and parcel of talking to others online
 - No one will judge or think less of you for this

Ok, So... How Do I Start?



Be Yourself!!!



How To Make New Connections

- Folks that you might know
 - Ask for advice
 - Ask if they know somebody that it would be beneficial for you to connect with
- Strangers
 - Introductions from folks you know
 - Introducing yourself to people in your immediate physical/virtual vicinity
 - Ask about their interests/be curious what their passions are and motivates them
 - Research people working in the industry or companies you are interested in
 - Connecting with folks with similar lived experience



Search



University of Waterloo

Higher Education · Waterloo, Ontario · 318,333 followers · 10,450 employees



Laura & 99 other connections work here

✓ Following

Invite

More

To find UW Alumni on LinkedIn, search for the University of Waterloo, then click on "Alumni" and have fun with the search feature!

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5,392 | University of Waterloo

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Human Connections In The Wild

Hello

I hope you are doing well and had a restful weekend! I've just finished my capstone assignment so I thought it would be a great time to reach out and ask whether you would be available to chat about your career path so I can pick your brain about human resources.

Would you be available some point next week for a cup of coffee? If so, when would work best for you?

Let me know! Thank you so much for offering to meet with me.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Hi kind of an out of the blue request but, are you free sometime next week to have a coffee chat? I know we talked a little bit before your last LinkedIn workshop about how you overcame your introvert tendencies and I would love to hear more about how you did it. If not, no worries at all we can arrange something else another time 😊

Hi as a new Human Resources graduate looking for opportunities within the Human Resources field, I would be happy to connect with you.

Human Connections In The Wild

Hi [redacted] I'm a fellow Laurier MSW grad currently working as a therapist. I found you through my network and saw that you're working at UW as a Career Advisor. I'd love to learn more about your role, and would appreciate the opportunity to connect by phone or e-mail if you'd be open to this.

Hi [redacted] Thank you for the "Get a Job on LinkedIn" workshop today. I found it extremely helpful. I would love to connect with you and learn more about your MEd, as I am also considering going into an education-related career. Thank you, and have a wonderful day!

Hi [redacted]

As previously discussed, I'm connecting you with D [redacted] - a fellow [redacted] alum! D [redacted] will be moving to KW from Toronto and is looking to learn more about the roles and opportunities across the higher ed institutions here in the area. Thanks for agreeing to chat with her!

D [redacted] is the wonderful colleague I mentioned previously!

Dear Prof. [insert name here]

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to connect with me about ____ [specific job / specific program / specific scholarship / specific award]. I am asking to connect because [I took ___ class with you and got ___ grade or received ___ comment / I am new here and hope we might eventually work together, and your work in ___ intersects with my interests... <https://hookandeye.ca/2014/10/15/asking-for-a-reference-letter-how-to/>]



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I have a meeting set up. Now what?

If possible, take a moment to think about these questions:

- Why are you meeting with this human?
- What questions do you have for them?
 - It'll save you many hours of googling!



Source: [GIPHY](#)

I have no idea what to ask. Give me a cheat sheet!

- Can you tell me about your career journey and what brought you to where you are right now?
- What challenges have you faced? How did you navigate those?
- What opportunities did you find and take advantage of?
- What is your advice about looking for work in this field?
- What main job search techniques would you use to find work in the field right now?
- What challenges face those who work in this field, or who work with typical employers? How can one stand out in the face of these challenges?
- What could I do to enhance my skills and experience?
- Do you know of any organizations that might be interested in someone with my qualifications?
- What groups/associations would you recommend that I join or volunteer for?
- Would it be alright to contact you again in the future? What is the best way to reach you?

Structured Opportunities to Meet New Folks

- Start Proud
- Lime Connect
- Black Medical Leaders of Tomorrow
- Rendez Vous: Women x Nonbinary Digital Connect (Pride at Work Canada)
- Matrices: Trans, Non-binary & Agender Digital Connect (Pride at Work Canada)
- Ten Thousand Coffees - UWaterloo (there are also some program or faculty-specific Ten Thousand Coffees sites – check them out)
- Employer Information Sessions – Check out the calendar on WaterlooWorks
- If a field you are interested in has a professional designation, there are likely networking opportunities to be found there

Community Spaces

WUSA Peer Support - MATES, Glow Centre, RAISE, The Women's Centre

Co-Op Connection – peer support

Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre

Tri Cities Guelph and Area Indigenous Community Connection

Student Societies

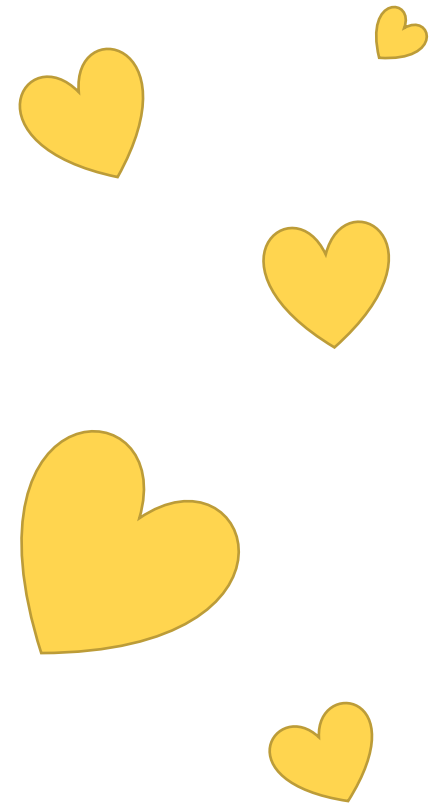
Student Clubs (e.g. cultural clubs, special interest clubs, etc.)

International Peer Community

Eventbrite - community meetups

Waterloo Public Library (or any local library) for events

...and more!



You Don't Want To Miss Out!

**How To Talk To Strangers About
Career Stuff Part 2!**

June 7th

1:00-2:30pm EST

Register now on WaterlooWorks!

Check out CCA Appointments and Workshops!



Work Search
Résumé
Cover Letter
Interview Prep
Career Exploration
Further Education



Individual Appointments
Drop-ins
Workshops
Online Resources

uwaterloo.ca/career-action



ANY QUESTIONS?



**WE WANT TO HEAR
FROM YOU!**
[Feedback Form](#)