

APPLYING TO CAMPUS HOUSING POSITIONS

1/16/2026

Vanya Rachel Gnaniah
Career Advisor
Centre for Career Development



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development



WHOSE LAND ARE WE ON?

The University of Waterloo acknowledges that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is co-ordinated within the Office of Indigenous Relations.

Reports: [TRC Calls to Action](#), [National Inquiry into MMIWG](#)

Reading: [The Inconvenient Indian](#), [21 Things You May Not Have Known About the Indian Act](#), [This Place: 150 Years Retold](#)

What land are you on? [native-land.ca](#)

Learning opportunity:

Indigenous Speaker Series - Kim Tallbear – Feb 2nd at 3PM. Register [here](#).



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

AGENDA

- Crafting a Standout Resume (20 min)
- Writing a Compelling Cover Letter (20 min)
- Responding to Application Questions (5 mins)
- Q&A and Wrap-Up (5 mins)

CAMPUS HOUSING APPLICATIONS

PORTAL AND APPLICATION PROCESS

- **Decide on a Role:** Review the [SDRX job descriptions](#) to see which position(s) interest you.
- **Attend Information Sessions** (optional but recommended)
- **Prepare Your Application:** Read the guides to understand application questions:
 - [New Student Application Guide](#)
 - [Returning Student Application Guide](#)
- **Submit Application:** Use the portal link under “CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION” on the Campus Housing site.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE APPLICATION

- 1 page resume
- 1 page cover letter
- New Applicants
 - Answer 3 application questions
 - Interview
- Returning Applicants
 - Complete a virtual 1-way interview with 3 questions

CRAFTING A STANDOUT RESUME



What do you believe is the most important element to highlight in a resume, and why?

STEPS TOWARDS CRAFTING A STANDOUT RESUME

1



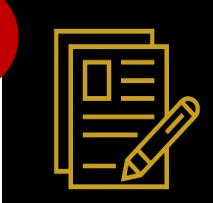
IDENTIFY your skills, interests, experience, values and work search goals.

2



ANALYZE job description(s) and **IDENTIFY** what employers are looking for in a successful candidate.

3



DESIGN & CREATE a document that showcases how you could contribute through your skills/experience.

4



REFINE your document to ensure it is making the right impression, highlighting your strengths, and speaking to employers.



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING A GREAT RESUME



IDENTIFY your skills, interests, experience, values and work search goals.



ANALYZE job description(s) and **IDENTIFY** what employers are looking for in a successful candidate.



DESIGN & CREATE a document that showcases how you could contribute via your skills/experience.



REFINE your document to ensure it is making the right impression, highlighting your strengths, and speaking to employers.



SKILLS CAN COME FROM ANYWHERE



Image from: <https://blog.jobactive.gov.au/how-to-write-about-skills-experience-your-resume>

- Relevant skills/experience:

- Paid jobs
- Volunteering
- Student club
- Extracurricular activities
- School/training
- Awards



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

WHAT ARE SKILLS?

- A skill is a **demonstrated** ability to do something well
- **Technical** skills vs. **transferable** skills
 - Technical: Skills learned for a specific purpose
 - Transferable: Skills used in multiple domains in your life
- Relevant skills/experience:
 - Paid jobs
 - Volunteering
 - Extracurricular activities (e.g. student clubs, personal projects)
 - School/training

STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING A GREAT RESUME



IDENTIFY your skills, interests, experience, values and work search goals.



ANALYZE job description(s) and **IDENTIFY** what employers are looking for in a successful candidate.



DESIGN & CREATE a document that showcases how you could contribute via your skills/experience.



REFINE your document to ensure it is making the right impression, highlighting your strengths, and speaking to employers.



READ AND UNDERSTAND JOB POSTINGS

THE EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

What are employers looking for?

- Accomplishments and results – not duties performed
- Relevant knowledge/skills/education/experience
- Personality (and how it fits)

"The employer is giving you their secret ingredient in the job posting!"

What problems do they notice?

- Vague, confusing or irrelevant content
- Poor written communication
- Lack of visual appeal/formatting consistency
- "Here's what you can do for me"
- Highly technical resume

JOB DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS



Residence Life Don (UG)| Campus Housing

Residence Life Dons at the University of Waterloo are appointed to foster a positive residence experience that is conducive to successful academic study and personal development. This live in position requires regular presence in the community, as well as excellent communication skills, proven leadership ability, good judgement, and a sincere desire to help others. A Residence Life Don must be willing to act as an ambassador of the University and support initiatives by the University and Campus Housing. Under the supervision of the Residence Life Co-ordinators (RLC), Residence Life Dons are expected to foster a sense of belonging in residence, practice positive role modelling, collaborate with staff and peers, and uphold residence and University policies.

Residence Life Dons may be approached by students who have experienced challenges or exhibit high-risk behaviours such as thoughts of suicide, sexual assault, domestic violence, and self-harm. Residence Life Dons are responsible for listening and providing resources to students; they do not provide counselling.

Key Accountabilities:

- **Administration:** Attend mandatory training, reporting & documentation, budget oversight, campus resource familiarity, confidentiality...
- **Community Development:** Positive role model for students, orient and integrate students to residence and University life, create awareness of opportunities for involvement within campus community, Implement and facilitate the Residence Experience Model, team player with consistency and communication within staff team, passion, interest and commitment to the role
- **Community Management:** Create and sustain an atmosphere conducive to academic success, Assist with response to residence policy violations, Perform Residence Life Duty Don responsibilities, Respond to first-aid emergencies, building evacuations, and crisis situations, Manage individual community to ensure appropriate and clean common spaces



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

DRAWING CONNECTIONS

Draw connections between what employers want and what you have.

What employer wants	Evidence I have it
Foster Positive Residence Experience	Built positive communities in student clubs by planning events, fostering friendships, and supporting diverse members.
Communication	Practiced clear written and verbal communication in coursework through research reports, presentations, and group collaborations.
Good Judgement/Emotional intelligence	Exercised good judgment in part-time customer service role by calmly handling complaints, resolving issues independently, and knowing when to involve a manager.
Desire to Help Others	Supported a classmate in managing academic stress by organizing deadlines and accompanying them to a campus support workshop

RESUME SECTIONS AND STYLING

Name

Location, Telephone, Email

LinkedIn, Website, Portfolio

Summary of Qualifications

Relevant Experience

Relevant Projects

Volunteer Experience

Education

Awards & Scholarships

Professional Memberships

Publications

Presentations

Activities and Interests

- Include any relevant experience.
- Prioritize/order/place your resume sections based on relevance.
- Maintain visual appeal and clarity to capture employer attention.
- Keep it to 1 page



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Current First-aid and CPR certification.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Familiar with Microsoft Office Suite.
- Fluent in French.
- 2 years of office work experience.
- Enthusiastic individual with an academic background in accounting and finance.

VS

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Experienced in fostering inclusive communities through volunteer work at a long-term care home.
- Strong communication skills, with experience leading student club events, mentoring peers, and collaborating on group projects.
- Demonstrated good judgment and responsibility in part-time work, balancing multiple priorities and resolving issues professionally.
- Committed to supporting student well-being, engagement, and personal development in a residence setting.

WRITING EXPERIENCE BULLET POINTS

- **Paint a picture with words** (help the employer envision you doing those jobs).
- **WHAT—HOW—WHY**

WHAT you did	HOW you did it	WHY it's important
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action or achievement verb (e.g., arranged, updated, prepared)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tool (e.g., programming language)• Approach/methodology• Adverb (e.g., effectively, accurately)• Role (e.g., member, treasurer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Result or accomplishment• Outcome• Impact• Quantify where possible

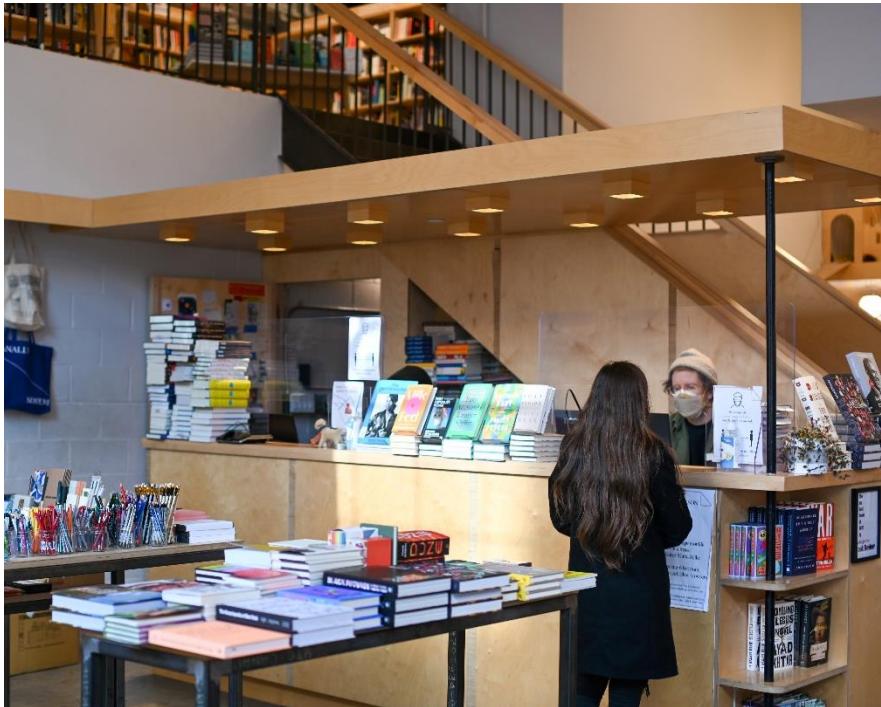
Format = **strong action verb** + **what** + **how** + **why** + **highlighting a skill**



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

DESCRIBING YOUR SKILLS / EXPERIENCE



strong action verb + what + how +
why + highlighting a skill



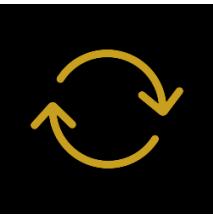
Sales Associate, Campus Bookstore | Ottawa, ON

- Helped customers at the store cash register.
- Used Microsoft Excel to enter data.
- Answered questions and provided customer service.

VS

Sales Associate, Campus Bookstore | Ottawa, ON

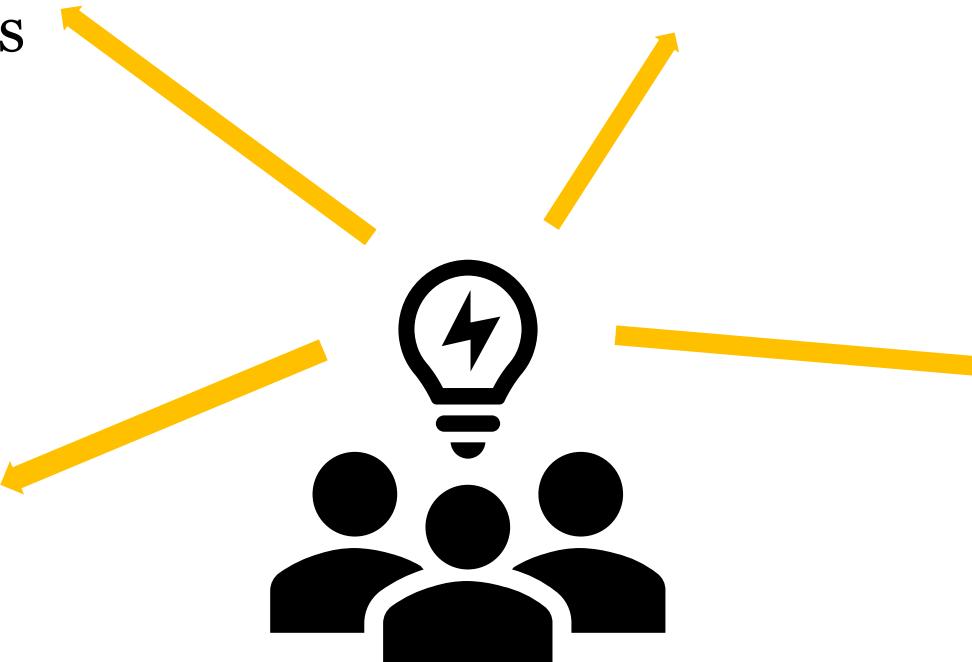
- **Communicated** effectively with customers **in-person**, over **email**, and **on the phone** to ensure satisfaction when responding to inquiries.
- Improved inventory management and tracking by creating data storage spreadsheets using Excel.
- Commended on 2 occasions for outstanding problem-solving and customer service by the store manager.



REFINE

Collect feedback from
trusted friends, peers,
mentors

Check out other people's
resumes
(what do you like, what do you not like)



Visit the Centre for
Career Development

Ask past supervisors
you trust



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

WRITING A COMPELLING COVER LETTER

What challenges have you faced (or do you expect to face) when writing a cover letter for campus housing?

The Function of a Cover Letter



- Cover letter = bridge between resume and interview
- A place to...
 - Demonstrate your interest in the role & how you can contribute
 - Go into detail! (Skills, experiences, etc.)
 - A narrative tool to convey: *why Campus Housing?* Show you've done your research



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

The Recipe:

One option: **Write your cover letter like a research paper!**

- Form a hypothesis: You [x] are perfect for the job [y] because...
- Show the “correlation” between y & x
- You choose the variables!
 - Interests? Values?
 - Skills? Experiences?
- Make the formula yours!



Another option...

Another option: **Write your cover letter like a creative writing project!**

- Set the context; create story
- Who are the key actors?
- What actions did you undertake?
- What skills did you use?
- What did you accomplish?
- Get creative! Applicable for all industries!



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

Let's Talk Strategy...

STEP 1: Review the job description

- Reflect on 2-3 reasons you want the job
- Highlight key words / skills
- Pay attention to tone

STEP 2: Research

- Learn more about campus housing: values, mission, key skills etc.
- This workshop!

STEP 3: Start writing!

- Tailor the cover letter based on priority and capacity – mirror the job posting language!



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

Cover Letter Structure

□ Opening

- Summarize how values/experience align with the Campus Housing's requirements/mission/values
- Show enthusiasm by highlighting your reasons for applying
- Name the job you're applying to and how you found out about it

□ Body

- 2-3 specific examples of why you're a good fit for the job
- Use **key words** from job posting

□ Closing

- Reiterate your reason for applying
- Refer to your enclosed resume and provide contact information to follow-up



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

WHAT SKILLS IS CAMPUS HOUSING LOOKING FOR?



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

JOB DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS

Front Desk Assistant | Campus Housing

Front Desk Assistants (FDA) at the University of Waterloo are appointed to **foster a positive residence experience** that is conducive to successful academic study and **positive social experiences**. This role requires **excellent customer service and communication skills, good judgement, and a sincere desire to help others**. A Front Desk Assistant must be willing to act as an ambassador of the University and support initiatives by the University and the department. This role provides residents, as well as staff and visitors, access to a multitude of services including but not limited to keys, printing, mail, wayfinding; and connects them to other services/resources within Campus Housing and the University of Waterloo. Residence Life Dons may be approached by students who have experienced challenges or exhibit high-risk behaviours such as thoughts of suicide, sexual assault, domestic violence, and self-harm. Residence Life Dons are responsible for **listening and providing resources to students; they do not provide counselling**.

Key Accountabilities:

- **Administration:** Attend mandatory training, meetings, understanding of campus resources
- **Customer Service:** Excellent, professional customer service, **develop positive connections**, team player, **communicates** relevant information, problem solves unique situations
- **Desk Management:** Provides accurate information, processes financial transactions, manages key records, escalates pertinent information, high standards of **cleanliness**, routine email checking



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

FROM IDENTIFICATION TO ARTICULATION

How can you demonstrate that you have these skills?



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

The Body Paragraph(s)



- Show, don't tell
- Use specific examples!
- Use S.T.A.R. approach to structure
- examples
 - Situation (What, when, who, why, where?)
 - Task (what action did you take?)
 - Action (What skills did you use?)
 - Result (What was the outcome?)



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

Show, Don't Tell

Telling

“I am able to work effectively as part of a team.”

Showing

Situation	In my mechanical engineering class this year,
Task	I was required to collaborate with my peers on building a functional robot.
Action	As team lead, I leveraged my project management skills to delegate tasks as well as my communication skills to resolve inter-personal conflicts.
Result	We received top marks and our prototype will be used as an example for future classes.



How might we improve this piece?

“I have excellent customer service and communication skills, and I always try to help people in a positive way. I am a team player and I enjoy supporting others with their needs. I believe my skills make me a good fit for this position because I can provide the services residents require and foster a positive residence experience.”



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

The Re-write

When a friend became overwhelmed while managing their co-op applications, I sat with them to organize deadlines, referred them to a relevant workshop, and followed up to ensure they felt supported. Moments like this reflect how I combine **customer service, good judgement, and a sincere desire to help others** - skills I will bring to the Front Desk Assistant role. By listening carefully, offering clear information, and connecting students with the right resources, I aim to foster **a positive residence experience** that balances academic success with social wellbeing.



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

John Doe

Address

Email

Phone

Date

Hiring Committee

Campus Housing – Student Development & Residence Experience
University of Waterloo

Dear Hiring Committee,

I am excited to apply for **the Front Desk Assistant & Residence Life Don (UG)** position at University of Waterloo, which I discovered through the Campus Housing job postings. This opportunity resonates deeply with my commitment to fostering inclusive communities, supporting peers, and ensuring positive experiences for all residents. Having volunteered in both customer-facing and student-support roles, I understand the impact of clear communication, good judgement, and thoughtful assistance in creating inclusive spaces where students can thrive academically and socially.

Specify the positions
you are applying for



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Last semester, during a residence social, I noticed a first-year student lingering near the snack table, hesitant to join a group activity. I walked over, invited them to participate, and introduced them to others who shared similar interests. By the end of the evening, they were laughing along with the group and later thanked me for making the residence feel like home. That moment reminded me how a small act of guidance and presence can turn uncertainty into confidence, and it's exactly the type of support I hope to provide as a Front Desk Assistant or as a Don. Just walking through the residence hall, I've noticed how residents pause at the front desk with questions about printing, keys, or events. I enjoy helping peers find answers quickly, connecting them to the right resources, and making sure their day continues smoothly. Working with Campus Housing is a chance to turn these everyday interactions into meaningful support that fosters community, encourages participation, and helps residents feel confident in their environment.

When I worked part-time at a campus coffee shop, I helped dozens of students and staff each shift. One morning, a student approached frustrated after their payment didn't go through and their order was delayed. I calmly walked them through the issue, offered a quick alternative, and checked in to ensure they were satisfied before leaving. By the end of the interaction, they were smiling and thanked me for making a stressful situation feel manageable. Experiences like this taught me how patience, clear communication, and attentiveness create positive experiences for everyone which are skills I am excited to bring to the Front Desk Assistant role, welcoming residents and connecting them to the resources they need.

Thank you for considering my application. My resume is enclosed, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experiences supporting peers and fostering inclusive community moments align with the goals of Campus Housing.

Sincerely,
John Doe



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development

ANSWERING APPLICATION QUESTIONS

How to Describe a Time You Supported Someone

- **Use the STAR Method**
 - Structure responses using Situation, Task, Action, and Result for clear and impactful storytelling.
- **Connect to the Campus Housing Roles**
 - Relate support experience to housing responsibilities like peer mentoring, conflict resolution, and community building.
- **Provide Specific Examples**
 - Use clear examples, avoiding vague or generic statements.

STAR APPROACH

Situation	Provide background and context <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who, what, where, when.• Be brief: you are just providing the context here.
Task	Describe what you needed to do <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What goals did you need to reach?• Include challenges and expectations.
Action	Explain what you did and how you did it <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include the tool(s) and/or skills you utilized.• Try to include all the actions you took, step by step, to paint a clear picture for the interviewer(s).• Focus most of your response on this part of the STAR approach.
Result	The outcome of your actions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What did you accomplish?• Include any positive feedback/recognition received.• What did you learn?



"TELL ME ABOUT A TIME YOU COMMUNICATED SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE TO A NON- SCIENCE AUDIENCE?"

Situation	In my second year of University, I was a volunteer for the "Lets Talk Science" outreach program at the University of Waterloo.
Task	I was tasked with designing and delivering an engaging, age-appropriate workshop on the climate crisis for students in grade 8 at a local elementary school
Action	I started by reviewing the 8th grade science curriculum to make sure the content I created would build on what students were already learning. I researched key climate change topics and identified what would be most relevant for this age group. To help simplify complex ideas, I reached out to a few of my professors and TAs for advice on how to break things down clearly. I incorporated a mix of visuals, short videos, hands-on activities, and real-world examples to keep things engaging.
Result	The workshop was well received—the students were very engaged and asked thoughtful questions. Several teachers commented on how it sparked further discussion in class. I received feedback that the session was informative, easy to understand, and motivating, which made me feel proud of creating something that made a real impact.



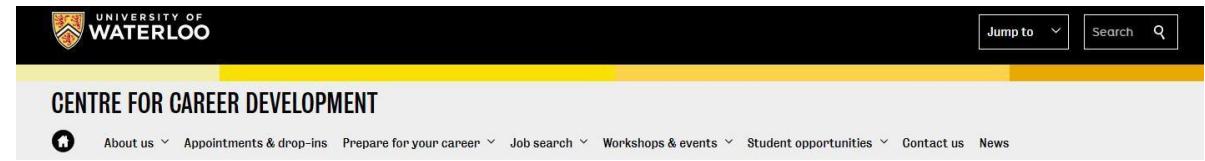
PREPARING FOR CAMPUS HOUSING INTERVIEWS

Jan 28, 2026 07:00 PM ET to 08:00 PM ET

SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

Additional Support

- Visit the Centre for Career Development (virtually or in-person) for one-on-one support with your job search and application documents, including **resumes & cover letters**
- 30-60 minute appointments
- Ongoing workshop offerings (WW)
- <https://uwaterloo.ca/career-development/appointments-drop-ins>



The screenshot shows the University of Waterloo Centre for Career Development website. The header features the University of Waterloo logo and a navigation bar with links for 'Jump to', 'Search', 'About us', 'Appointments & drop-ins', 'Prepare for your career', 'Job search', 'Workshops & events', 'Student opportunities', 'Contact us', and 'News'. Below the header, there are links for 'Alumni', 'Employees', 'Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows', 'International students', and 'Parents and supporters'.

Appointments and drop-ins



We offer both virtual and in-person appointments to help you explore your possibilities.

Chat with us

Every Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. ET, get your questions answered through our [live chat](#).

CONNECT WITH US THROUGH
[Live chat](#)

Resources at your fingertips

As you work your way through your career journey, we are here to help.



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development