

RESUMES TIPS: THINKING LIKE AN EMPLOYER

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- Fun fact: I love swimming and field hockey



Housekeeping

- Take what works for you and leave what doesn't!
- These slides will be shared with you after the fact
- We'll hold space for Q&A after the presentation



Photo by Dennis Leinarts from Pexels



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Today's Roadmap

- 4 Steps towards crafting a great job application
- The importance of skills identification & articulation
- Resume writing strategies
- Bonus tips for your work search and career ahead!



The background is a solid yellow color. It features several abstract geometric shapes and lines. In the top left, there is a red L-shaped bar. Below it is a light purple L-shaped bar. A horizontal bar at the bottom is composed of a light purple segment on the left and a teal segment on the right. On the right side, there is a thick blue vertical bar that curves at the bottom. A light purple diagonal bar crosses the bottom right area, overlapping the blue bar and the teal segment of the bottom bar. A small red vertical bar is located at the bottom center, overlapping the teal segment and the blue bar.

RESUME TIPS

Steps towards building a great job application

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.



STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING A GREAT RESUME



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SKILLS CAN COME FROM ANYWHERE



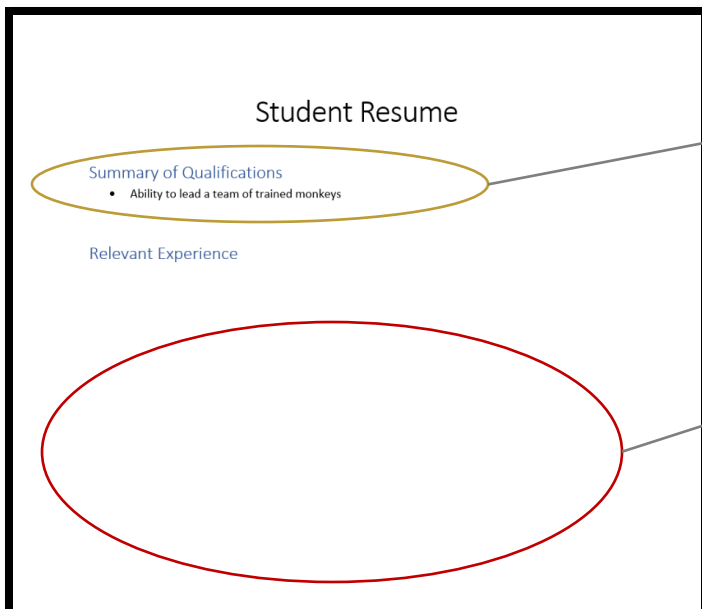
Image from: <https://blog.jobactive.gov.au/how-to-write-about-skills-experience-your-resume>

- Formal / informal training, courses, workshops
- Relevant skills/experience:
 - Paid jobs
 - Volunteering
 - Student club
 - Extracurricular activities
- Relevant projects/achievements
- Awards and recognitions



Why Skills Articulation is Important

- Employers will identify the skills they want, but the articulation is up us!
 - Employer: “We want **RED**”
 - Job seeker: “I have **vibrant candy apple RED with hues of crimson!**”
- Job seekers often name their skills, but leave out evidence and context...
 - E.g., “Excellent communication skills, ability to work independently and with a team”



Summary of Qualifications: “Ability to lead a team of trained monkeys”

Remainder of resume/cover letter: no mention of or evidence for trained monkey management



Role/Activity/Project/ Class/Club	Experience	Skills/Attributes
Took Biol 130 (Introductory Cell Biology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Completed a DNA extraction and sequencing project and created a presentation for the class (received a grade of 89%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project management- Communication and presentation skills -Laboratory skills (DNA extraction and bacteria culture)
Organized Fundraiser for Environmental Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organized and scheduled club meetings, annual clothing drive, bake sale events -Created posters and advertising material for events -Managed the club's community bank account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Microsoft Excel, Canva -Event planning, organization, and management -Budget and financial reviews
Part-time Waiter at a Restaurant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Coordinated activities with other staff to ensure tasks were done quickly and accurately -Commended twice by manager for excellent customer service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Time management and problem solving -Customer service and relationship building

What skills do I want to (further) develop?

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THE EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

“Recognize that most employers are using the résumé to screen you out rather than to select you in.”

Derek Chapman, Ph.D.,
Professor of Industrial Organization and Psychology
at the Haskayne School of Business

THE EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

What are employers looking for?

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

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"



Making Your Case

- Why are you a match for the job?
 - Identify the employer's "wish list"
 - Identify your skills & experiences
 - Create a table if it helps!



JOB DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS

Administrative Assistant | Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is an international **leader** in providing innovative services for people with MS and their families and advancing research into the cause and cure of multiple sclerosis. Reporting to the Finance Department, the successful candidate will be involved in the regular **processing of financial transactions** at the chapter, division, and national office level as well as a number of Finance projects supporting different business units. We are looking for an **enthusiastic** individual to fill an Administrative Assistant position with us.

Specific job responsibilities:

- Enter bank deposits from regional locations into accounting system
- Processing of **accounts payable and accounts receivable** transactions
- Review financial statements and maintain cash flow schedules for all locations on a monthly basis
- Complete **financial analysis** for various projects
- Assist with **budget analysis** and preparation of budget templates for next fiscal year
- Generate **tax receipts** for donations to fundraising events, process credit cards and encode cheques for fundraising events
- Assist with formatting and distribution of financial statements as required and other finance members with filing as required

Required qualifications:

- Working knowledge of **Microsoft Office suite**, including strong working knowledge of **Excel**
- Familiarity with **accounting software** with working knowledge being a benefit
- Detail and **deadline oriented** and able to work in a fast paced environment
- Demonstrate a strong **attention to detail** with a high level of accuracy
- Possess excellent **time management** skills with the ability to prioritize multiple tasks
- Ability to **solve problems** and practice good decision-making
- Strong **communication** skills, both oral and written, accompanied by solid **interpersonal** skills

DRAWING CONNECTIONS

Draw connections between what employers want and what you have.

What employer wants	Evidence I have it
Time management	Effectively balanced role as club president and a full-course load while maintaining Honour Roll status.
Verbal communication	Prepared and delivered 15-minute presentation to a panel of judges; received feedback that ideas were clearly communicated and convincing.
Microsoft Excel	Created functional Excel spreadsheet to club meetings; increased efficiency of scheduling process.

STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING A GREAT RESUME



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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.
- Consider industry standards – 1 or 2 pages?



SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

A “highlight reel” of 4-6 points that demonstrate your fit for the job.

- Relevant experience/accomplishments related to your field/industry.
- Relevant knowledge/skills/expertise (language, technical, transferrable).
- Education/awards that complement practical experience.
- Relevant personal characteristics and attributes.
- Specialized training/education relevant to the objective.
- Make sure to reference where or how you developed the above skill

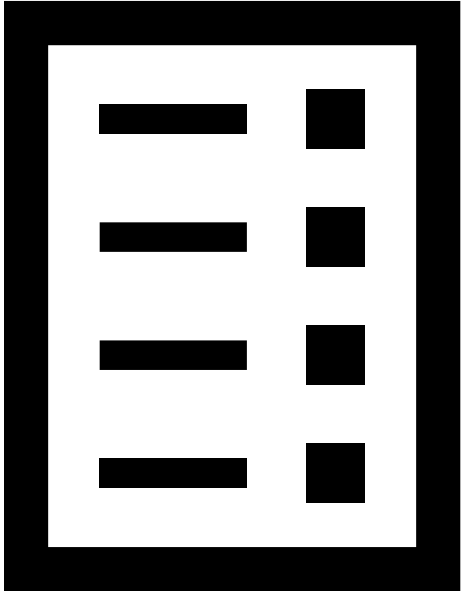
WRITING EXPERIENCE BULLET POINTS

- **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



More Bullet Point Tips



A few strategies:

- Skill + Evidence
- What + How + Why
- Action + Impact
- Job duties/responsibilities

A few tactics:

- “Key words”
- Action verbs
- Quantification
- Bolding/emphasis

What if your resume is being run through an ATS?

ATS = Applicant Tracking System



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Pro Tip: “Smart Tailor” Your Resume!

- Consider creating a “master resume”, which includes ALL of your experiences in one document
 - You might also consider writing different versions of the same bullet point for a specific experience, to speak to different skills
- Consider creating a “master summary of qualifications”, and pick and choose which bullet points to include and which order to put them in depending on the opportunity you’re applying to
- Consider creating multiple versions of your resume if applying to different job types/jobs in different fields or industries

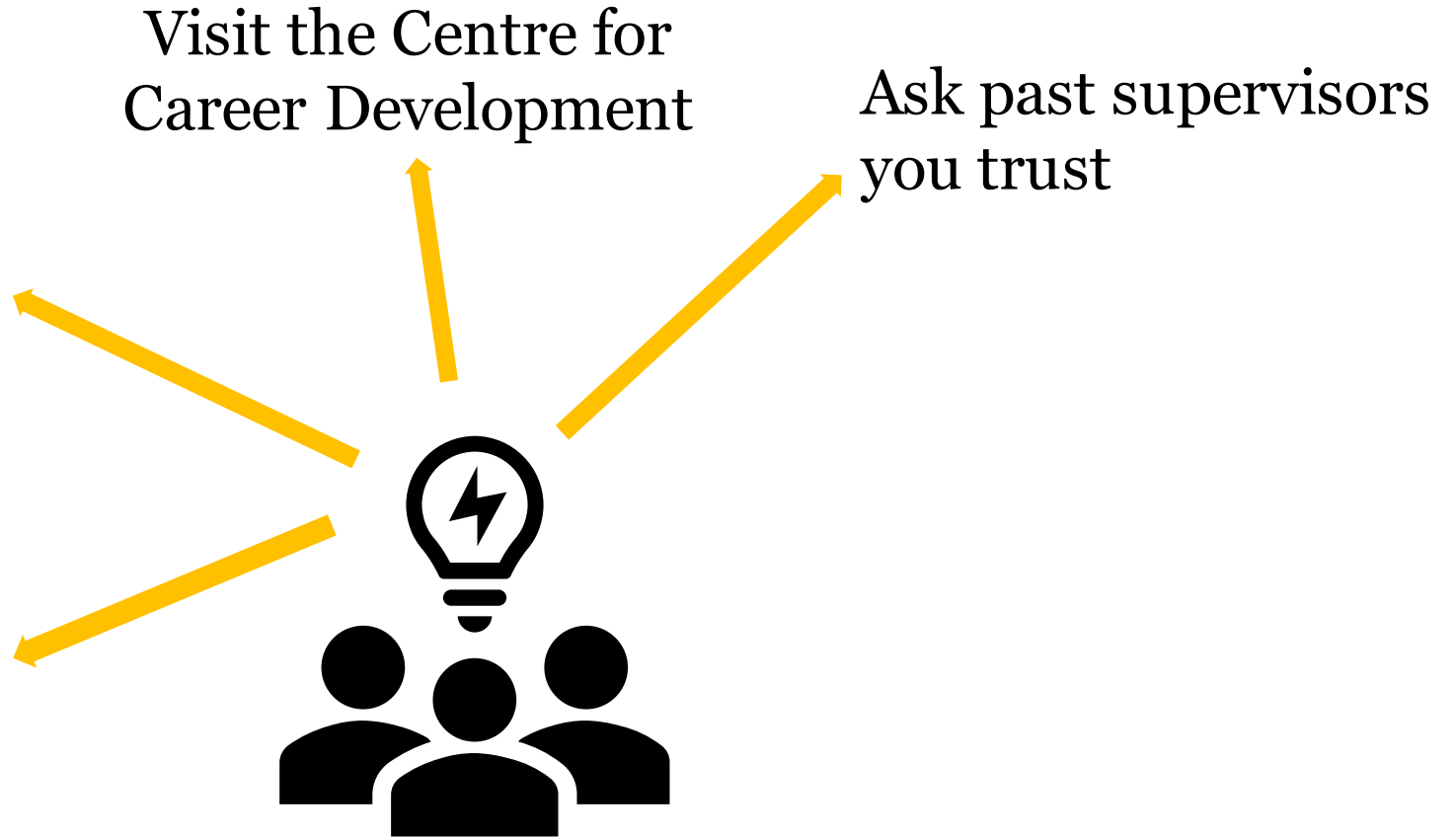




REFINE

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



The background is a solid yellow color. On the left side, there is a red L-shaped bar at the top, a light purple L-shaped bar below it, and a light purple horizontal bar at the bottom. In the center, the text 'BONUS TIPS' is written in large, bold, black, sans-serif font. Below it, the text 'What about cover letters?!' is written in a smaller, black, serif font. On the right side, there is a blue vertical bar that curves at the bottom, a light purple diagonal bar, and a red vertical bar at the bottom. A teal horizontal bar is also present at the bottom, overlapping with the light purple bar.

BONUS TIPS

What about cover letters?!

What about cover letters?: Prioritizing job applications

Job Applications

High priority

Jobs that align very well with my interests/career goals

Mid-priority

Jobs that are appealing but not in complete alignment with my interests/career goals

Low priority

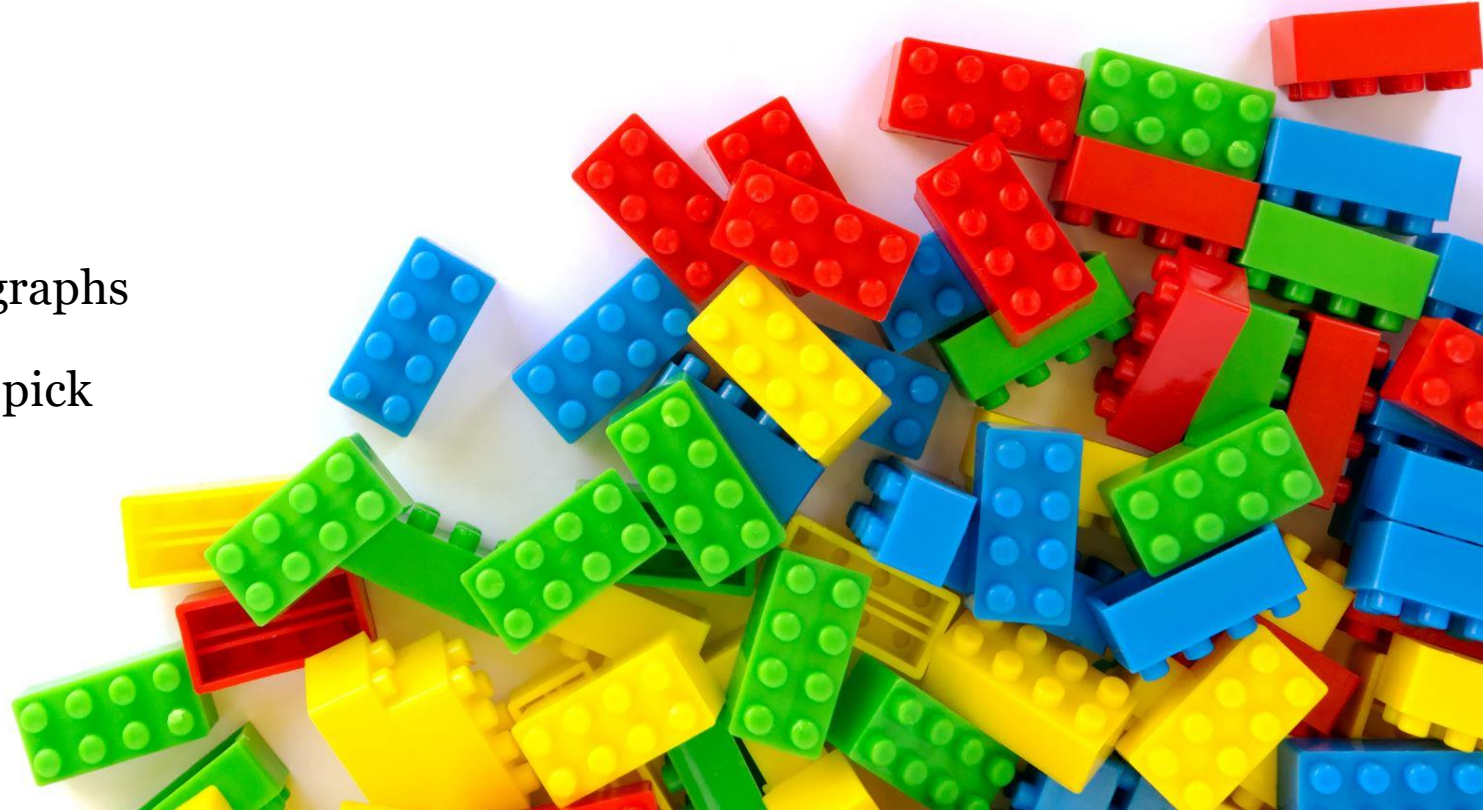
Jobs in minimal alignment with my interests/career goals

- When should I submit a cover letter?
- How much time should I invest tailoring my cover letter?
- Is it OK to submit a generic cover letter?



More smart tailoring!

- Don't write every cover letter from scratch!
- Look for patterns and recurring key works in job postings
- Try out the Lego approach:
 - Paragraphs = building blocks
 - Swap out the opening and closing paragraphs
 - Prepare multiple middle paragraphs to pick and choose from



The STAR Approach

Applicable to both cover letter writing and upcoming interviews (e.g., “Tell me about a time when...)

Situation	Background and context
Task	What you needed to do
Action	What you did and how you did it
Result	The outcome of your actions



Reminder: 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.



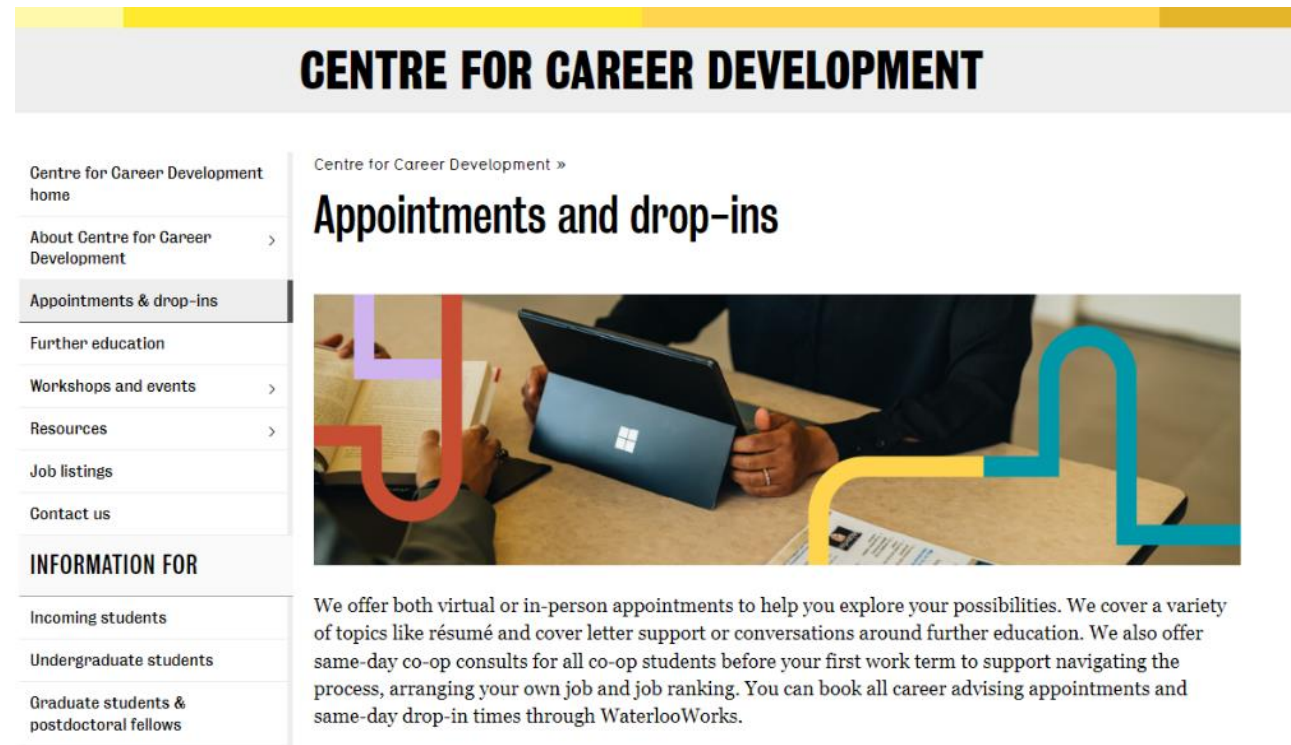
Key takeaways for your job applications

- Starting point → identify relevant skills, experiences, goals
- Understand the employer perspective
- Analyze job descriptions to assess employer needs
- Draw connections between what employers want; provide evidence you have it
- “Smart” tailor your documents
 - Consider creating a “master resume”, or using the Lego approach for your cover letters
- Show, don’t tell!
 - What + How + Why / Action + Impact / Skill + Evidence
 - S.T.A.R approach



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, & interview prep**
- Same day 20-minute drop-ins
- 30-minute appointments
- <https://uwaterloo.ca/career-action/one-one-supports>



The screenshot shows the website for the Centre for Career Development. The header is a grey bar with the text 'CENTRE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT' in bold black letters. Below the header is a navigation menu with the following items: 'Centre for Career Development home', 'About Centre for Career Development >', 'Appointments & drop-ins' (highlighted with a grey background), 'Further education', 'Workshops and events >', 'Resources >', 'Job listings', and 'Contact us'. Below the menu is a section titled 'INFORMATION FOR' with three sub-sections: 'Incoming students', 'Undergraduate students', and 'Graduate students & postdoctoral fellows'. The main content area features a large image of a person using a laptop, with colorful abstract shapes overlaid. To the right of the image is the heading 'Appointments and drop-ins' and a paragraph of text: 'We offer both virtual or in-person appointments to help you explore your possibilities. We cover a variety of topics like résumé and cover letter support or conversations around further education. We also offer same-day co-op consults for all co-op students before your first work term to support navigating the process, arranging your own job and job ranking. You can book all career advising appointments and same-day drop-in times through WaterlooWorks.'



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Questions?