



CONVERSATION PARTNER PROGRAM WINTER 2025 HANDBOOK



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Table of Contents

WELCOME!	2
PURPOSE OF THE CONVERSATION PARTNER PROGRAM	2
CONVERSATION PARTNER PROGRAM CODE OF CONDUCT	3
EXPECTATIONS	3
GLOBAL EXPERIENCE CERTIFICATE (GEC) AND EDGE CERTIFICATION	4
INTERCULTURAL TRAINING MODULES	4
CONVERSATION IDEAS	5
CONVERSATION ACTIVITIES	6
CONVERSATION TIPS	7
THINGS TO DO IN KITCHENER-WATERLOO	8
ON-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES	8
ENGLISH LANGUAGE BASICS	9
SHARE YOUR PHOTOS WITH US	9

WELCOME!

We welcome you to the Winter 2025 Conversation Partner Program. This handbook provides useful information such as possible conversation topics, ideas for in-person activities on campus and around Waterloo, and a reminder of the CPP expectations. Please read this carefully.



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Renison Student Experience and Housing team by email at ren-cpp@uwaterloo.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE CONVERSATION PARTNER PROGRAM

The program is designed to provide you and your partner with an intercultural experience while making a new friend. This one-on-one program will allow you to learn about one another’s culture and allow international students to practice their English!

CONVERSATION PARTNER PROGRAM CODE OF CONDUCT

By joining the Conversation Partner Program, you are agreeing to commit to the following:

- To meet with your partner for 1-2 hours per week and maintain contact with your partner regularly throughout the term,
- To respond to your partner (whether you can attend a meeting) and reschedule a new meeting with your partner if you cannot attend,
- To create a safe and accountable environment where the personal boundaries and privacy of your partner are respected,
- To complete the online mid-term check-in and end-of-term surveys promptly once invited to by the Renison Student Experience and Housing team, and
- To notify the Renison Student Experience and Housing team immediately if there are any concerns.

EXPECTATIONS

- Meet weekly and complete **20 hours by the end of the term.**
Note: Students studying in the APPLS or SWK courses may have a 12-hour time commitment. Please speak with your partner to learn what the requirements are for each of you.
- **Meet in person** whenever possible, except when illness or other extenuating circumstances require you to meet online via Zoom, WhatsApp, or other online platforms. As long as more than 60% of your meetings are in person, some may be online.
- You and your conversation partner are responsible for staying connected with each other and arranging meeting times. **Please respond to your partner's messages or emails within 24 hours if possible.** You may want to speak with each other about a preferred method of communication. For example, perhaps you both would prefer to use Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, Email, or another platform.
- Please **be considerate of each other.** If, at any time, you are unable to meet with your partner please let them know in advance.
- You and your partner are responsible for entering **weekly hour submissions** through the log hours button on the [CPP website](#).

- You will receive an email from the Conversation Partner Program within the first couple of weeks as a **progress check-in**.
- If, for any reason, you are unable to continue with this program or have any concerns about your pairing, **please do not hesitate to contact ren-cpp@uwaterloo.ca**.

GLOBAL EXPERIENCE CERTIFICATE (GEC) AND EDGE CERTIFICATION

Students completing the Global Experience Certificate (GEC) and EDGE program are expected to **complete the required hours within one-term**. GEC candidates must complete 20 program hours, and EDGE candidates are expected to complete 36 program hours. To ensure that you can achieve these certifications, **you may be matched with more than one Conversation Partner**. It is very important that you log your hours each week to ensure that you are on track!

Please note that if you have two or more conversation partners as part of your certification, partner hours must be completed separately.

If you have any questions, please contact your program support inbox:

- Global Experience Certificate: gec@uwaterloo.ca
- EDGE: edge@uwaterloo.ca

INTERCULTURAL TRAINING MODULES

When you participate in the Conversation Partner Program, you're taking part in a multicultural experience! Take part in our Intercultural Training modules online to get a head-start in enhancing your intercultural skills.

You can enroll in the Online Intercultural Training by following these steps:

1. Visit the LEARN website at <https://learn.uwaterloo.ca/>.
2. Log in with your WatIAM credentials (your Quest information).
3. Click the "Self Registration" link in the toolbar menu.
4. Search "Renison Intercultural Training" in the list of course options and click the link.
5. Click the "Register" button on the next page.
6. Click the "Submit" button on the next page.
7. Click the "Finish" button on the next page.
8. Click "Go to course offering 'Renison Intercultural Training'".
9. Click the "Access the Renison Intercultural Training" button on the homepage.
10. Begin the training!

CONVERSATION IDEAS

Food

Discuss different food or show some pictures of dishes you've had during the week. Show each other what you would eat on a typical day, or during a holiday! Teach your partners how to order at a restaurant.

Coins and Currency

Show each other your own currencies and explain what each coin is called.

Videos and Pictures

Share some photos to give a "tour" of your city or neighbourhood. Share some of your favourite videos and memories that highlight your culture.

Folklore

Share some famous or well-known mythology stories or cultural superstitions.

Games

Play games online or show each other how to play any typical card games or board games that you would play with your family and friends growing up.

Family

Discuss the typical family size in your culture. How many siblings (brothers and sisters) do each of you have? How did you address family members?

Transportation

Share the different modes of transportation. How do you use it? What kinds of different transportation are there?

Careers

Talk about the most common careers in your countries. Which career path would you like to take? What did you want to be when you were a child?

Education systems

Identify any differences in education systems you and your partner have experienced. What age do you begin and finish school?

Holidays



Share the big holidays in your country. How much time do you have off for those holidays? How do you celebrate those holidays?

Hometowns

Have a conversation about the most famous thing in your hometown? Where should you visit in Kitchener Waterloo, or in your hometown?

Seasonal Activities

Highlight the typical winter, fall, spring, or summer activities in your country. What activities do you enjoy doing in the different seasons?

Sports

Introduce your partner to your favourite sport. What sports do you have in common?

Hobbies

Introduce your partner to activities that students normally like to do in their free time. What hobbies do you enjoy?

Music

Show new music to your partner and share your favourite artists with each other. What groups or singers are most popular in your country?

Travel and Vacation

Share your favourite vacation spots. What is your travelling style?

Houses and Buildings

Discuss what a typical house looks like. How tall are the buildings in your city? What is the architecture like?

CONVERSATION ACTIVITIES

Click on the hyperlinks below for more info about these activities.

- [98 Random Conversation Starters](#) – A list of questions that you can ask to get to know your partner.
- [Twenty Questions](#) – The objective of the game is to guess the person, place or thing in 20 questions or less.

- [Just a Minute](#) – Speak on any given subject for a minute.
- [Presentation](#) – Create a fun presentation about your life story or other interesting topics and share it with your partner.
- [Playlist](#) – Create a Spotify playlist with your partner and include your favourite music.
- [Renison Events](#) – The Renison Student Experience and Housing team offer events that are open to you and your partner.
- Board Games – The Renison Ministry Centre (Room 1108) lends out free board games that you can help yourself to at any time to play. You may also borrow board games from the Renison Lusi Wong Library with a WatCard.

CONVERSATION TIPS

Be patient and understanding

Your partner may be searching for a word or phrase. Before you try to help, count to 10 in your head to give them time to find the answer on their own.

Ask clarifying questions

“What do you mean by that?” or “Can you tell me more about x?” can help bridge the knowledge gap for you and your partner.

Use slang!

But don’t forget to explain what it means. If you catch yourself using a short form or a slang word, ask your partner if they have heard it before. If they haven’t, take a second to explain what the word means.

Be aware of body language

Make eye contact, be mindful of your facial expressions, and face your partner. A little intentional body language goes a long way to make a good connection!

Practice active listening

Paraphrase what your partner has said to show that you have heard their story. Use short verbal affirmations like “yes” and “go on”. Share a similar experience if you have one. Be present in the conversation!

Rephrase

When sharing information or asking questions, try rephrasing your statement to help your partner understand.



THINGS TO DO IN KITCHENER-WATERLOO

- Visit your favourite [coffee shop](#) in Uptown Waterloo
- See a movie at the [Princess Cinemas](#)
- Try a milkshake at [Mel's Diner](#) or find your new favourite restaurant in the [University Plaza](#)
- Take a walk in Waterloo Park or Victoria Park
- Go shopping at [Conestoga Mall](#) or [Fairview Park Mall](#)
- Explore the [Kitchener Market](#) or take a bus to the [St Jacob's Farmers Market](#)
- Learn to play a new game at a [Board Game Cafe](#)
- Test your teamwork at an Escape Room like [KW Escape](#)
- Experience live music at the [Jazz Room](#) or [Maxwell's](#)
- Take a drop-in dance class at [Underdog Dance Corp.](#)
- Go to a [Kitchener Rangers](#) ice hockey game



ON-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

- Attend a [WUSA Event](#) together
- Join or follow a [WUSA Club](#) and attend sessions together
- Go swimming at the [PAC Pool](#)
- Learn to rock climb at the [PAC Climbing Wall](#)
- Take a [fitness class](#) together
- Book a [Squash Court](#) and learn to play
- Join an [Intramural team](#) together
- Take a walk to the [Earth Sciences Museum](#) to see the dinosaurs
- Navigate campus through the [indoor tunnel system](#)
- Enjoy lunch together at the [South Side Marketplace](#)
- Play piano together in the Renison Cafeteria
- Catch a [Warriors Athletics](#) home game

ENGLISH LANGUAGE BASICS

You may find that your partner has some specific English grammar questions. You may know the structure of the grammar rule, but it can be difficult to find the name or explain it. Here are some items that your partner might ask about that:

Item	Examples
Idioms – a pair or group of words that have their own meanings, but when used together, the meaning changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raining cats and dogs - “That was a piece of cake!” - Make a mountain out of a molehill
Adverb – a word or phrase that changes an adjective, verb, or other adverb or a word group, expressing relation of place, time, circumstance, manner, cause, degree, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gently - Quite - Then - There - Quietly - Quickly
Phrasal Verb – an idiomatic phrase consisting of a verb and another element, typically either an adverb or a preposition, or a combination of both.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Break down - See to - Look down on
Present Continuous Tense – a statement that consists of the auxiliary verb “be” and a verb ending in “-ing”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She is studying. - They are running. - We are learning English.
Past Continuous Tense – a statement using “was/were” and a verb ending in “-ing” to indicate that an action began in the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I was reading last night. - We were studying yesterday. - You were playing outside.

[Dave’s ESL Café](#) is a great place to start if you are curious about grammar examples and definitions.

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS WITH US

We would love to see what you’ve been up to this term! If you take any photos during your meet-ups, you can share them with the SEAH team on the [Conversation Partner Program website!](#)

If you or your partner requires support, please reach out to ren-cpp@uwaterloo.ca or sign-up for a [One-on-One Meet-up](#) with a member of the Student Experience and Housing Team.