

## How to organize a Career panel/Seminar of professionals in your virtual classroom

### What are Career Panels?

Career panels are an in-school opportunity for students to interact with professionals in a wide variety of career areas to learn about what it takes to prepare for a specific career and what it takes to be successful in the world of work in general. Students and guest speakers gather in relatively small groups of 15 –35 students, with a moderator, in a structured format for a class period (usually 90 minutes). The discussion is driven by student questions regarding all aspects of the speakers' career path. Career panels are usually integrated into a specific required class and include some preparation and follow-up activities.

The career panel usually have 3 or 4 professionals. There are two types of career panels: "General" – speakers from mixed career areas (usually based upon student interest); "Focused" – speakers from a targeted career area (example: health careers) (usually based upon a specific class, teacher or industry focus). Focusing on optimizing student interaction, the Career Panel format creates an informal, respectful discussion venue where students are encouraged to ask questions that matter to them

### What are the benefits to students:

- It is powerful for students to see that adults in their community care about them by participating, listening and responding to each student's question.
- A connection is made between what is being learned in school and the tools they will need for success in the world of work.
- Speakers' personal stories of their own school and career challenges give students hope.
- Opportunities are created for connecting/networking with local employees/employers.
- Specific information about the best ways to prepare for a specific career area (i.e. volunteering, doing job shadowing, community college programs, or college majors) can be extremely helpful.
- Students hear that it is important to focus on "doing what you love."

### What makes a Career Panel successful?

- Student preparation: students know (and often help select) what careers will be represented on the panel(s) and they have a classroom activity for developing questions beforehand.
- Ratio: One panel per one class of students (maximum 35 students), 3 or 4 speakers per panel.
- Time frame: Panels need to be held during 60-90 minutes to allow full student participation and question period at the end.
- Virtual Format: The classroom teacher welcomes the guests and introduces rules as moderator for the group. The moderator greets the students and speakers, explains the format and initiates the conversation. Once the speakers are all identified and briefly introduce themselves, the moderator begins the student questions. Each student asks a question which they would like one or all the speakers to answer. Questioning proceeds until each student has had a turn. If there is time students can ask additional or follow up questions.

**Planning in class:**

**Instructors:**

- Determine dates, time, schedule, classes/teachers, and number of panels requested.
- Prepare student activities: discussion of careers, explanation of career panel format, identify top student career interests, preparation of student questions, follow-up debrief discussion and completion of teacher and student evaluations.
- List Self-Reflection Questions to get students thinking about their learning experience.

**Speaker recruitment:**

- Guest speaker recruitment: identify potential speakers through your professional and personal network, contact alumni students, use LinkedIn, ask contact name from staff in your Department (internship coordinator, Co-op advisor, etc.).
- Create speaker information sheet providing the schedule of the event, zoom meeting information and list of typical questions.
- Ask each guest speaker to provide a brief bio to introduce them at the beginning of the event.
- Make confirmation calls/emails to all speakers two days before their scheduled date(s).

**Students involvement and preparation:**

- Help identify top career areas of interest in your class.
- Develop and write down three questions for the career panel guests.
- Come prepared to the panel discussion (bring your questions and participate fully).
- Be respectful of guests and classmates.
- Complete required follow-up assignments and evaluation form.
- Encouraging students to write thank you letters or emails to guest speakers.

**NOTE: It is important to verify/obtain complete contact information on all speakers including: phone and email addresses. All participants should be emailed thank you letters and evaluations after career panels are completed.**

**Students .....**

Career panels give you the opportunity to speak with people from the community about:

- What they do
- How they got there
- The challenges and rewards

The speakers come to answer **YOUR questions**. All students are expected to participate. So that you will be prepared, please take a few minutes to write down three questions that you would like to ask. What would you really like to find out?

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

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

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

**NOTES:**

***Remember to bring this sheet with you to the career panel!***

## Possible questions for Career Panel speakers

This list is to help students get ideas. **It is important for students to come up with their own questions**, based upon interest, experience and curiosity. Each student will be expected to ask one question. It is recommended that each student write down at least 3 questions and bring them to panel.

1. How did you choose your career? What interested you in this field?
2. Describe your current job and what is the primary function of your department/organization?
3. Could you describe a typical workweek or day on the job?
4. How did you acquire your position? What job search methods did you use?
5. What other positions have you held or considered?
6. What skills are most important for this career? i.e. highly definable ones such as computer programming or public speaking, or less definable skills such as good organizational ability, attention to details, strong persuasive skills....
7. What aspects of the job are most appealing? Least appealing?
8. What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?
9. What future do you see for the job market in this career?
10. What is the pay range for your career?
11. What reasons do people get fired for in your business?
12. Are there spin-offs or developing areas students should know about?
13. What do you know now that you wish you would have known when you graduated from University?
14. Does your organisation offer any summer, part-time, or internship positions for students?
15. Are you considering making a major career change in the future?
16. What are the advantages and disadvantages within different types of sectors, i.e. private, non for profit, provincial and federal?
17. What kinds of experiences, paid employment or otherwise, would you most strongly recommend? What about internships or volunteer work?
18. Do you still have to keep getting training for what you do? How do you stay abreast in your field?
19. Looking back at your career, Did it turn out as you expected?

## Speaker information sheet

There will be 3 or 4 professionals on your panel. The instructor will be the panel moderator as well as your host. You will be virtually with 20-35 students. The format is informal; Speakers briefly introduce themselves. The discussion then proceeds based upon student questions.

**Provide us with a brief professional bio 1 week prior the event (example below)**

Thank you for your help. By sharing your personal experience, you are helping students to learn...

- what kinds of skill sets are common to most careers
- how career choice is related to lifestyle choice
- what types and levels of jobs are available in this career field
- how a young person should prepare (recommendations for university courses, related activities, and typical university majors)

**If appropriate, please bring any examples of your work, tools of the trade, or handouts.**

**Students are always interested in visuals and hands-on experiences.**

Please contact \_\_\_\_\_ for any schedule questions or unanticipated emergency. We look forward to meeting with you! We appreciate your participation in this activity that helps students in making important life decisions, and supports their “University to career” transitions.

## Examples of Guest speaker bio

**Rochelle Methot** is a Concordia University alumni (class of 2011) with a Bachelors degree in Urban Planning. She currently works as a water course manager at the Municipalité Régional de Comté (MRC) du Haut-Saint-Laurent, overseeing the water-related projects of 13 municipalities.

Beyond her primary role with the MRC, Rochelle assists various Concordia professors in the Geography, Planning, and Environment departments with the management of academic conferences such as ISUF and NESTVAL. She is currently working with Dr. Jochen Jaeger on a long-term research project.

Rochelle also volunteers as an event coordinator for a charity golf tournament, helps run annual conferences in her line-of-work, and even finds time to plan a few weddings on the side.

**Peter Mouhteros** is a licensed Real Estate Broker in the Province of Quebec who graduates from the Bachelor of Arts program at Concordia University, specializing in Urban Planning with a minor in political Science. As part of his degree requirement, Mr. Mouhteros worked as an intern at the Town of Kirkland’s Town Planning Department.

Before having begun his university education, Peter was a Mortgage Consultant. In 2010, he joined Jones Lang Lasalle as a Research analyst in the Shared Services Group in the company’s Montreal office. He is now an Associate in the Industrial Services Group of Jones Lang Lasalle. His main responsibilities include business development, negotiating sales ad lease transactions, and expanding the group’s coverage in the Greater Montreal Area.

**Career Panel Session - Evaluation Form**

*Please take a few moments to provide feedback about today's session. Your replies to the questions will help us to define improvements for future presentations.*

**1. Circle as many qualifiers as you wish that represent this seminar?**

Relevant	Motivating	Too long	Useful
Irrelevant	Boring	Informative	Clear
Practical	Inadequate	Understandable	Enjoyable

**2. What part(s) of the seminar did you most enjoy or find the most useful?**

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**3. Do you feel more confident about the career ahead of you?**

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**4. Is there anything you would like to see changed or included for a future Career Panel session?**

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**5. Do you have any other comments to add?**

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