



The USask Graduate Student **Independent Development Plan**



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Graduate
and Postdoctoral Studies

GRAD.USASK.CA

*The IDP is a tool developed for graduate students to help plan their student experience. Completion is not a requirement.

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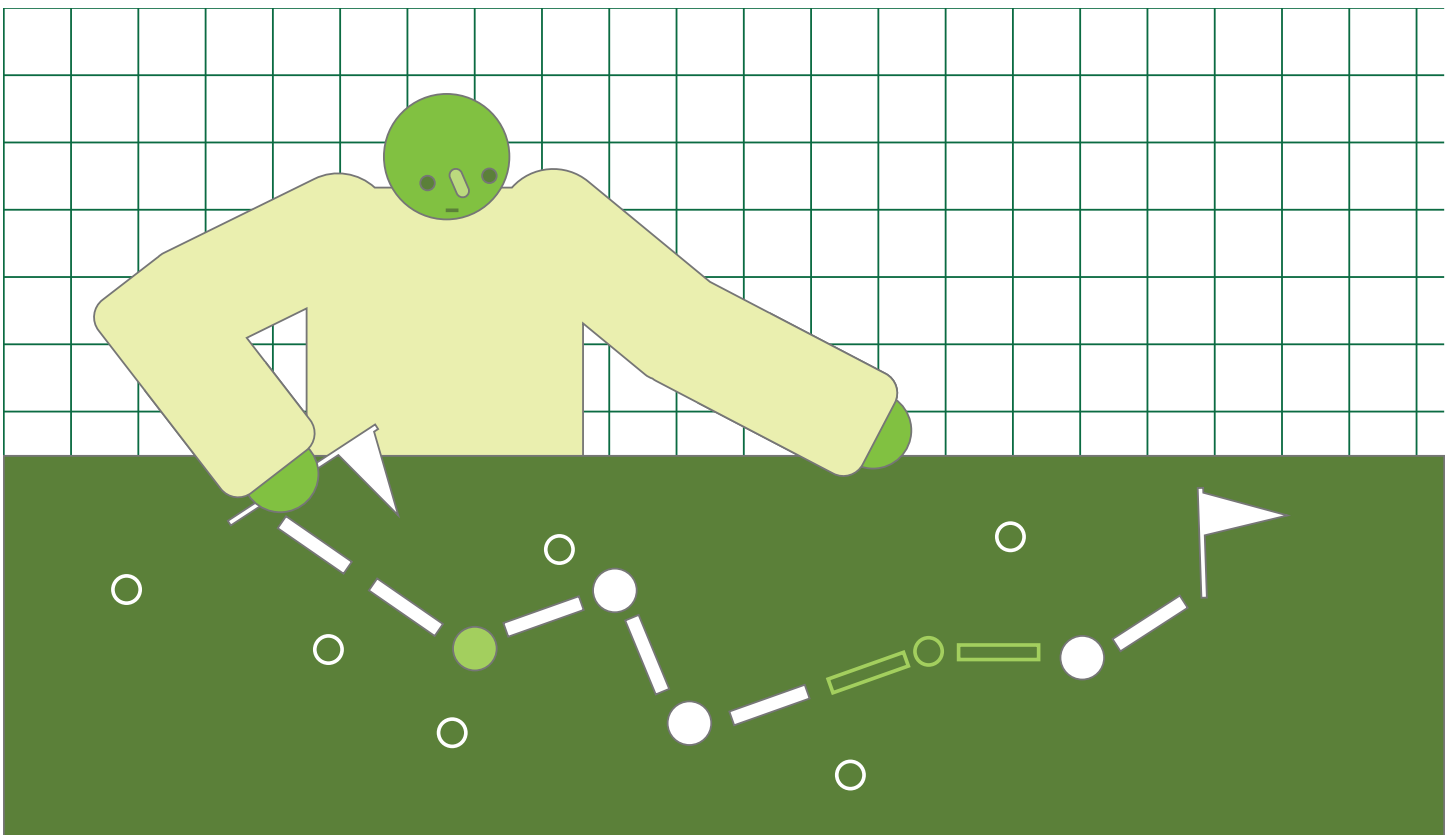
Individual Development Plan

What is an IDP?

The GradHUB's Individual Development Plan (IDP) from the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) is a tool to assist you in mapping your program and development towards your desired career(s). The IDP is designed to facilitate identifying desired career goals, opportunities for development, and the necessary tools to assist you in these pursuits.

The ultimate goal of the IDP is to help you in planning for your future and making the most of your graduate student journey.

While the IDP is a tool for your development and future, we encourage you to use your IDP in your conversations with others. This document can help communicate to your supervisor, committee, and other mentors about your professional goals as well as the necessary development and growth to allow this plan to come to fruition. They may be aware of opportunities they may want to communicate with you to help you in your journey.



Benefits of an IDP

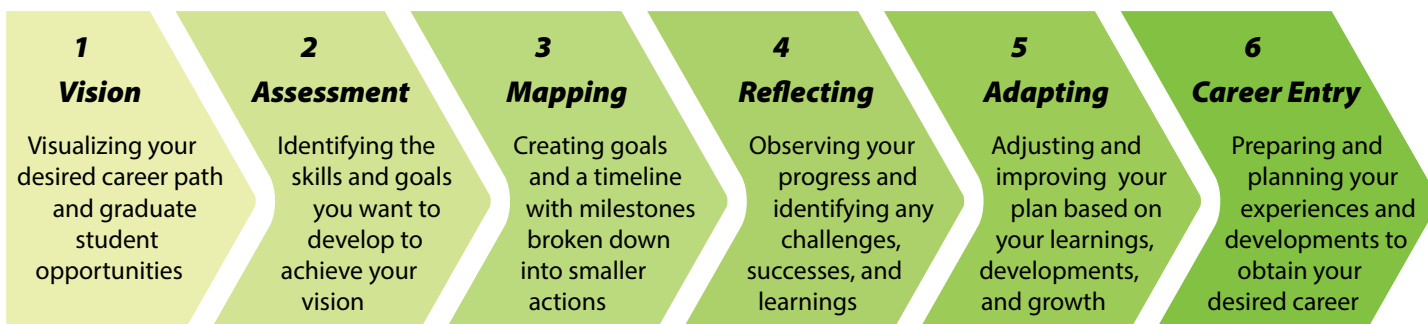
The process of both starting graduate school and mapping your career path are overwhelming experiences. Your IDP is a process that allows you to create a map of where you want to go, how you plan to get there, and provide manageable actions that can help you mobilize movement towards your destination. Engaging in this developmental process will help you in enhancing the mastery of your craft and disciplinary skills.

Other benefits include:

- Explore and evaluate your career choices, taking into account your skills, interests and values
- Acquire insight, experience, and understanding of your desired industry
- Identify your strengths, weaknesses, and areas of focus required for your chosen career path
- Formulate a cohesive strategy and plan of action to simultaneously achieve your personal goals, aiding your holistic development
- Facilitate conversations with your supervisor, committee, and mentors around your development and career progression
- Identify and engage with resources meaningful to aid progression towards your goals
- Prioritize course work, projects, extracurricular activities, and professional development opportunities based on their relevance and alignment with your goals
- Plan day-to-day activities based on their degree of alignment with your goals
- Direct where you want to build industry connections and networks to facilitate achieving goals
- Re-evaluate your goals and development throughout your program, as your studies and development progresses

The process of creating your IDP

The process of creating your IDP has six steps illustrated in the figure below. Each step is explained in detail as you move throughout the workbook. While this process is displayed in a linear fashion, we encourage you to review and update your IDP annually, adjusting for your progress and changes in your professional aspirations.





Vision

As a first step in creating your IDP, reflect and think about the things you enjoy doing, activities you have natural strengths, and important characteristics within your career. These reflections will help you in brainstorming potential career paths that will align with your strengths, values, and desires. These efforts will also help highlight potential career paths that are not a good fit for you.

Desired career dynamics

When exploring desired careers, it's important to consider career dynamics (outside of the role itself) that are important to you. Review the below list of work attributes and identify if each attribute aligns with either a preference, value, or core value.

Preferences are "nice to haves" in your career

Values are attributes that are tied to important beliefs.

Core values are beliefs tied closely to how you operate and are often non-negotiables.

Work Attribute	No Preference	Preference	Value	Core Value
Work alone				
Work on a team				
Work for an employer				
Be self-empolyed				
Highly structured work environment				
Self-directed work				
Low level of responsibility				
High level of responsibility				
No critical decisions				
Make decisions that have impacts on others				

Work Attribute	No Preference	Preference	Value	Core Value
Supervise others				
No supervision responsibilities				
Regular work hours				
Varying daily and weekly work hours				
Hours of work set by employer				
Determine my own hours of work				
Frequent travel				
Little or no travel				
Results of work are visible				
Results of work are invisible				
Opportunity to retire early				
Continued work opportunities				

Adapted from Fellman, W. R. (2000) Finding a Career That Works for You. Plantation, FL Specialty Press, Inc. and Justin Pritchard MDes, Career Coach, University of Alberta Career Centre

Now take some time to review the work attributes and record below your top core values that are essential to your desired career. As you look at these values, consider and outline why they are important to you. In the last column, record a list of the core values you are willing to compromise on.

My top core values	Why these core values are important to me	Elements I am willing to compromise on

Career exploration

While you are at the beginning of your program, it's important to consider the potential careers you are building towards. **Your desired career(s) can always change and adapt as you develop. However, having an initial direction will support you in maximizing your graduate experience.**

Begin by exploring and researching potential careers that you may want to pursue after you complete your program. There are many avenues to pursue potential careers.

First, with the chart below, consider and narrow potential fields you may want to work in:

Academia	Public Sector/Government	Private Sector/Industry
Research and scholarship	Arts and cultural organizations	Clinical work
Academic publishing	Government	Consulting
Grant administration	Administration	Entrepreneurship
Principal investigator	Non-profit	Non-academic publishing
Research support	Policy development	Patenting
Teaching-intensive career	Research management	Technology transfer
Academic administration	Education and training	Research and testing

Second, now begin to research potential jobs within these different sectors that align within your discipline and interest. You can explore potential career through utilizing some of the below tools:

Job Sites

- Search for keywords in job search engines and review current job postings (e.g., indeed, SaskJobs)

Organization websites

- Consider agencies in your field and review their job postings.

LinkedIn

- Look at job descriptions in profiles or LinkedIn job postings
- A [guide to leveraging LinkedIn](#)

Extra Job Exploration Guides

[Additional job search sites](#) | [Tips on job searching](#) | [Occupational Research Guide](#)

Third, things to consider when exploring potential jobs:

- What areas of my discipline excite me?
- What areas do I want to learn more about?
- What types of work environments do I work best in?
- What type of work do I want to do?

As you are researching potential roles, record your top six positions in the left column below. Then outline some initial plans on how you can learn more about this career in the right column.

What career would you like to learn more about?	Planned ways to learn more about the career

When learning more about each career, here are something you way want to identify:

- What is the field?
- What skills will you need?
- What education/training are required?
- What experiences should you gain during your graduate degree?
- What competencies will you need?

Career Exploration

Career Information Interviewing with people in the field can be a great way to get to know more about a career option. Career Services has [a guide on Career Information Interviews](#).

My career options

Review your desired career attributes and your top six selected careers. Narrow these careers to your top three careers that match your desired career attributes. Take the information you've gained so far and begin building out your potential career profiles below.

Career Profile #1

Describe the career option

Describe why this career option is of interest to you

Based on my research, what skills, abilities, competencies, or experience do I need for this career?

What potential connections can I utilize to learn more about this career?

Career Profile #2

Describe the career option

Describe why this career option is of interest to you

Based on my research, what skills, abilities, competencies, or experience do I need for this career?

What potential connections can I utilize to learn more about this career?

Career Profile #3

Describe the career option

Describe why this career option is of interest to you

Based on my research, what skills, abilities, competencies, or experience do I need for this career?

What potential connections can I utilize to learn more about this career?

Your graduate student experience

Obtaining a career is only one element of a graduate student journey. Your graduate student experience can allow an array of opportunities that can contribute to your overall development. Let's take some time to create a vision of experiences you want to obtain at some point in your graduate career.

How will your graduate program and training support you towards your vision and set the foundation for your career of choice?

Which of the following graduate student experiences are you interested in participating in during your graduate journey?

Supporting instructional activities as a teaching assistant

Teaching a course

Collaborating in research as a research assistant or co-investigator

Involved on campus (e.g., volunteering)

Involved in department (e.g., sitting on a committee)

Involved in the community through volunteering or other activities

Building my network of graduate student peers

Joining a student groups or association

Participating in extracurricular activities

Attending a conference

Presenting at a conference

Publishing a manuscript in a peer-reviewed journal

Participating as an editor or reviewer in a journal

Study or teach abroad

Other graduate student experiences/opportunities you want to engage with (e.g., committee work, volunteering)



Assessment

The starting point in your career development process is to conduct a self-assessment. A self-assessment will help you to identify your skills, values, interests, and preferences, and identify areas where you want to improve, gain more knowledge, or strengthen skills.

Self-Assessment Tools

Let's take some time to assess and examine your current competencies and skills. Go through the below list of skills and competencies and rate your current competency level (e.g., high, medium, low). What each level represents (i.e., high, medium low) will be contextual to your desired career. Review the career profiles you created as the measure, **high representing exceeding the necessary competency level, medium representing meeting the desired competency, and low reflecting needing development.**

Skill/Competency	High	Med	Low	Notes
Accountability				
Adaptability				
Advocacy				
Analysis and synthesis				
Attention to detail				
Civic participation				
Community building				
Community engagement				
Creative expression				
Creativity				

Skill/Competency	High	Med	Low	Notes
Critical thinking				
Customer service				
Empathy				
Ethics and integrity				
Financial literacy				
Fostering inclusion				
Global perspective				
Identity development				
Indigenous cultural awareness				
Indigenous ways of knowing				
Initiative				
Intercultural skills				
Interpersonal skills				
Marketing				
Mentoring, coaching, advising				
Navigating group dynamics				
Networking				
Oral communications				
Organization and time management				

Skill/Competency	High	Med	Low	Notes
Persuasion				
Problem solving				
Project management				
Research				
Resilience				
Self-improvement				
Self-management				
Supervising and leading others				
Teaching and facilitating				
Teamwork				
Understanding leadership styles				
Technology				
Writing				



Identifying developmental focus areas

Compare the necessary skills you need for your desired careers (pg 9-11) against your self-assessment (pg 13-15). The gap between the necessary skills and your self-assessment are areas you should focus your development during the graduate student journey. Below we have provided prompts to guide you through identifying your developmental focus areas.

List the key skills and competencies needed for your desired careers.

List the key skills and competencies that require development to achieve your desired career.

Create developmental goals for the skills and competencies that you want to focus on during your graduate program.

Where Can I Learn New Skills?

[LinkedIn Learning](#) | [Mitacs Training](#) | [Graduate Writing Workshops](#)
[Graduate Research Workshops](#) | [GMTCL Instruction and Teaching Assistant Skills](#)

Take the skills and competencies you plan to develop and match them with an appropriate activity that can support you in developing the skill or competency.

Skills/competency to develop	Possible course/workshop/training/opportunity



Setting goals

The space between your current competencies and the required competencies for your career is the gap we want to address. Drawing on the answers from your self-assessment, select the areas needing development to meet the qualifications and competencies of your desired careers. These developmental areas are going to be your goals and help map the various attributes you will develop throughout your graduate experience. These goals also provide a framework to guide what you develop, inspire motivation, assess progress, and allow reflection to identify barriers.

In the following sections, we provided some tools to help you in framing your development direction and then break this down into smaller goals. You will be able to break down each goal into your overall objective, actionable steps, proposed timeline, and a plan on how you intend to monitor your progress. Move through each section to map out your development plan.

Example

Goal	Objective	Actions/Training	Timeline	Monitor
Develop my qualitative research skills	Gain familiarity in conducting and analyzing research interviews through hands-on experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Join a research collaboration - Support data collection abilities - Conduct data analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sep to Nov - Jan to Mar - Apr to May 	At the end of each term, check in progress in achieving actions

Student experience

Description of your **student experience** goals for the next academic year.

Goal	Objective	Actions/Training	Timeline	Monitor
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Research

Describe your **research** goals for the next academic year.

Goal	Objective	Actions/Training	Timeline	Monitor
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Professional Development

Describe your **professional development** goals for the next academic year.

Goal	Objective	Actions/Training	Timeline	Monitor
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Career Planning and Preparation

Describe your **career planning and preparation** goals for the next academic year.

Goal	Objective	Actions/Training	Timeline	Monitor
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Program Map

Planning your program is the most effective way to be efficient with the time in your program to ensure you achieve all your program's requirements and graduate journey goals. To locate your program components visit the [University's Program Catalog](#).

For more guidance on interpreting your program requirements visit the [GradHUB Blueprint](#). Take your program requirements and plug the different requirements into the table below. Place the requirements in the cell of the term and year you hope to complete the requirement. Make sure to incorporate your graduate student journey goals from page 12.

	Term 1 (Sep-Dec)	Term 2 (Jan-Apr)	Term 3 (May-Aug)
	Year 1		

Classes

Thesis/Project/ Capstone			
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Instruction & TAing

Grad Student Experience			
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Term 1 (Sep-Dec)

Term 2 (Jan-Apr)

Term 3 (May-Aug)

Year 2

Classes

**Thesis/Project/
Capstone**

**Instruction
& TAing**

**Grad Student
Experience**

Year 3

Classes

**Thesis/Project/
Capstone**

**Instruction
& TAing**

**Grad Student
Experience**



Term 1 (Sep-Dec)

Term 2 (Jan-Apr)

Term 3 (May-Aug)

Year 4

Classes

**Thesis/Project/
Capstone**

**Instruction
& TAing**

**Grad Student
Experience**



Tracking and Reflecting

To avoid potential delays in your program, it's important to track your different program requirements. Use the table below to track your completion of different requirements and when you have completed them. Depending on your program, not all requirements will be required for your degree. Review your program requirements from [the program catalog](#).

Program Tasks	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	N/A
Language requirements achieved						
Scholarships and grant applications completed						
Course work selected						
Ethics training requirement completed						
Individual Development Plan created						
Course work completed						
Advisor/supervisor selected						
Committee formed						
Develop project proposal (Capstone, Project, Thesis, Dissertation)						
Dissertation/thesis proposal defended						

Program Tasks	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	N/A
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Candidacy exam completed

Ethics for research project completed

Research for thesis/dissertation project completed

Thesis/dissertation writing completed

Thesis/dissertation submitted to committee

Thesis/dissertation oral defense

TA a course

Instruct a course

Attend a conference

Present at a conference

Review an article/conference presentation

Write and submit a publication to a journal

Develop teaching through GMCTTL

Editing a journal

Mentor/supervise undergraduate students

Join professional or student society

Volunteer on a board



Adapting

The majority of plans are not successfully completed. This is not related to the quality of one's plan; plans tend to fail for a variety of other reasons, like:

- Poor adherence to the plan
- Failure to identify and resolve barriers to progress
- Lack of adapting one's plan based on changes to circumstances.

Select check in dates. We want to create at a minimum a check-in at the start of each term, and an annual review in the third term of your program every year. **We suggest putting these dates in your personal calendar or planner too so you don't forget!**

Term 1 check in date(s)	
Term 2 check in date(s)	
Annual check in date(s)	

Term Review Instructions

Plan any graduate student opportunities to be completed in the upcoming term

Adjust term complete steps

Update and adjust program map based on course offerings

Update program requirements progress (pg 26)

Review your mapping goals (pg 19-22)

What were your goals, did you achieve them, what were the barriers to success, what needs to shift (see [next page](#) for tables to guide reflection)

Annual Review Instructions

Complete term review above

Identify any changes to your career goals (pg 9-11). Make any necessary changes and additional research in newly identified career paths.

Review entire IDP and make required changes to map your career path

Review IDP changes with your supervisor

Example

Goal	Achieved (Yes/No)	Barriers to Success	What would you do differently or change?
<i>Complete graduate research workshops to build research</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Registration for course was full</i>	<i>Register earlier in training opportunities</i>

Goal	Achieved (Yes/No)	Barriers to Success	What would you do differently or change?
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Goal	Achieved (Yes/No)	Barriers to Success	What would you do differently or change?
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Example

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Goal	Achieved (Yes/No)	Barriers to Success	What would you do differently or change?
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Example

Goal	Achieved (Yes/No)	Barriers to Success	What would you do differently or change?
<i>Complete graduate research workshops to build research</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Registration for course was full</i>	<i>Register earlier in training opportunities</i>

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Goal	Achieved (Yes/No)	Barriers to Success	What would you do differently or change?
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Preparing for Career Entry

Preparing for career entry is a set of activities from the start of the program until your completion. Below are suggested tasks all graduate students should participate in preparation for career entry. Use the columns in the right to mark what year you plan to complete the corresponding task from the left column.

Career Preparation Tasks	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	N/A
Build professional contact list						
Identify and attend networking opportunities						
Develop academic and professional online media presence (academia.edu, ResearchGate, LinkedIn)						
Conduct career interview with mentors/network						
Book appointment with a career coach through career centre						
Develop my CV/resume						
Book an appointment at the career centre to review CV, resume, cover letter						
Follow up and build relationships with contacts						
Network with contacts to nurture potential job opportunities						

Networking Tips

Career Services has a great [guide to networking](#). Additionally, volunteering is a great way to network, so be sure to look into [available volunteer opportunities near you](#).

Skills and Competency Inventory

To helpd you in preparing for entry into your desired career, take stock of your various skills and provide examples of these skills. This list will also be helpful for job interview preparation and CV/resume/cover letter writing.

Skill/Competency	High	Med	Low	Notes
Accountability				
Adaptability				
Advocacy				
Analysis and synthesis				
Attention to detail				
Civic participation				
Community building				
Community engagement				
Creative expression				
Creativity				
Critical thinking				
Customer service				
Empathy				
Ethics and integrity				
Financial literacy				
Fostering inclusion				
Global perspective				

Skill/Competency	High	Med	Low	Notes
Identity development				
Indigenous cultural awareness				
Indigenous ways of knowing				
Initiative				
Intercultural skills				
Interpersonal skills				
Marketing				
Mentoring, coaching, advising				
Navigating group dynamics				
Networking				
Organization and time management				
Persuasion				
Problem solving				
Project management				
Research				
Resilience				
Self-improvement				
Self-management				
Supervising and leading others				

Skill/Competency	High	Med	Low	Notes
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Teaching and facilitating

Teamwork

Understanding leadership styles

Technology

Writing



Professional Development Unit (PDU)

Throughout your program you will gain experience that will be relevant to your entry into industry or academia. It's important to keep track of these different experiences you gain from projects that you can use in interviews and networking opportunities to communicate the competencies you'd developed throughout your graduate program.

In the below table, identify a competency area in the left column (e.g., data analysis) and then illustrate the competency in the right column. You can do this by providing some details around the context of the competency. This includes what actions you took within the example, the final result, and a reflection on how you developed or what you gained from the experience.

Competency Area (Knowledge, skill, ability)	Competency Illustration (Describe the context, your actions, the end results, and what you gained from the experience)
<i>e.g. Data analysis</i>	<i>e.g. I worked on a community engagement project that required data collection from community stakeholders. I was responsible for cleaning and preparing the data for analysis. My work resulted in a framework of major themes that guided the next actions of the project team. The project provided me with the opportunity to apply a new analytic approach and make connections amongst different sample populations.</i>

Applying for Jobs

The final step in your journey will be applying for jobs. This will require you to consult pages 7-8 for information on potential jobs. You will want to begin identifying current available positions through web searches (e.g. company websites, job search engines) and your network (e.g. LinkedIn) that align with your desired career profile positions.

Using the table below, track the jobs you are applying for, the people to follow up with, and the progress of your application.

Job Title	Company	Follow Up Contact Info	Due Date	Application Method (e.g. email, website)	Application Submitted	1st Interview Date	2nd Interview Date	Offer	Rejection	Notes

For more helpful resources for grad students,
visit the **USask GradHUB**.

<https://cgps.usask.ca/onboarding/index.php>



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