



## Career Connections Assignment: Educator Guide

This quick guide describes suggested instructional activities that should take place before and after the Career Connections Assignment.

### BEFORE THE ASSIGNMENT: Setting the context

Show an **introductory video** and discuss the following questions: [SFU Career Services: Wondering Where Your Degree Might Lead You?](#)

- The video discussed factors that influence your career goals and decisions you make about school and work. What factors (personal, environmental, social, cultural, physical, etc.) factors do you think would impact you most? Why?
- What actions can you take to stay alert of these factors, so you can make informed career decisions?

Share some **statistics** to demonstrate the world of work is constantly changing, along with our own career goals and aspirations:

- "Canadians can expect to hold roughly 15 jobs in their careers." (Workopolis, 2014, para. 8) <https://careers.workopolis.com/advice/how-many-jobs-do-canadians-hold-in-a-lifetime/>
- "85% of the jobs that today's learners will be doing in 2030 haven't been invented yet." (Institute for the Future, 2017, p. 14) [https://www.delltechnologies.com/content/dam/delltechnologies/assets/perspectives/2030/pdf/SR1940\\_IFTforDellTechnologies\\_Human-Machine\\_070517\\_readerhigh-res.pdf](https://www.delltechnologies.com/content/dam/delltechnologies/assets/perspectives/2030/pdf/SR1940_IFTforDellTechnologies_Human-Machine_070517_readerhigh-res.pdf)

There's also the **Monte Carlo Fallacy**. Scenario: 5 reds show up in a row in roulette. Do you bet on black or red next? Often a typical response would be that we should surely bet on black since there is no way it could happen a 6th time". Though we are less likely to get 6 reds vs. 1 black and 5 reds in any order - we have equal chance to see RRRRRB and RRRRRR – since the events are independent.

We can easily draw meaning from events that are in fact independent. Basing our decisions on independent events is tempting – but not logical. Not landing that job one or two or three times can make us think we are never going to get the job or moreover that we are not capable of performing the duties of the position. We may have years of study, and 3 instances of failure could unravel the confidence of our training. In fact, it can be argued that learning from your failed interview experiences would help improve your future interview performances.

Considering these statistics, along with various factors we each face, when it comes to managing our careers successfully, we need to **be cognizant** that:

- Career planning is a lifelong learning process that involves making countless decisions
- Career indecision may be sensible, even desirable
- Anxiety about planning for the future is normal
- Planned happenstance doesn't mean leaving to chance



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*(Note: Educator may want to ask students to think of personal examples, or provide their own, to illustrate each bullet point.)*

With this in mind, the assignment can now be introduced.

### **AFTER THE ASSIGNMENT: Debrief the experience**

Share in small groups how you went about compiling your list of career contacts. Discuss the following questions:

- Who did you choose to have career conversations with, and why? What were the main lessons you gathered from these conversations (as well as how you organized and facilitated these conversations)?
- What worked and what didn't work? Generate tips and strategies to share with the rest of the class.
- Identify one or two actions you will now take as a result of this assignment towards your career journey.

To conclude, show video on [Jim Carrey talking about his dad](#); the main message connects nicely with SFU introduction video in the sense that we can't control our dream jobs' existence or even that of our "safety" job. As such, it is important for us to practice the five critical skills of career planned happenstance, which are:

- Curiosity: explore new learning opportunities
- Persistence: continue trying even when you run into setbacks
- Flexibility: be open to changing attitudes and situations
- Optimism: see new opportunities as being possible and attainable
- Risk taking: have the courage to do something even when you're not sure how or if it will turn out

Optional activity: Have students review the one or two actions they had identified in the small group discussion and consider if they are practicing any of the five critical skills.





## Career Connections Assignment

This assignment is designed to help you increase the likelihood of career planned happenstance through making purposeful connections with others, both face-to-face and online. Career planned happenstance describes an individual's ability to:

- Generate, recognize, and incorporate unplanned/chance events into their career development
- See unplanned/chance events as inevitable, desirable, and as opportunities for learning
- Be open-minded, curious, and develop an exploratory attitude to increase their chances of being exposed to unexpected/chance events

This assignment consists of three main components and is intended to help fulfill the following [sustainable development goals and subgoals set out by the United Nations](#):

**Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning

- 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

**Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive

- 8.5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- 8.6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

### COMPONENT 1: Develop your career contact list

Compile a list of 250 individuals who might play a contributing role to your career. These can be individuals already within your network (e.g., friends, classmates, family, co-workers), or individuals you would like to meet (e.g., local business leaders, contacts within your network). When identifying individuals, consider diversity and find people with varying perspectives. For example, is there someone whose life experience might be different from your own that you'd like to learn more about? Who might be able to positively challenge your perspective?

To keep track of your connections, organization is key. You may use MS Excel or apps such as [HubSpot](#). In your list, include their first and last names, contact information (email and/or phone), and why you think they might be helpful to your career. Students who were thoughtful about who they include in their contact list and benefitted the most from the assignment. For instance, a former student in KPU's EDUC 4100 (Post-University Transition) course who aspired to become a Meteorologist included the Chief Meteorologist from a local news network on her list as a possible career contact.

*A note on privacy: As you are compiling people's contact information, please be respectful of their privacy and not share their information (e.g., put your contact list publicly online).*



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## COMPONENT 2: Connect with your career contacts

### Part A

Reach out to everyone on your contact list by sending them a message. You may choose to start with a generic templated message that you adapt depending on the individual.

Your message may include the following:

- Any professional, academic, or personal updates (e.g., completed a diploma/certification, took on a new volunteer opportunity, etc.)
- Your plans after graduation
- An invitation to stay in touch and/or to connect further (see Part B)

**What if we don't (yet) know each other?** Think back to why you have included them on your contact list. Perhaps you are fan of their work (and in that case, tell them why because who doesn't like compliments!) or they have unique experiences that you wish to learn more about. Explain your "why" to them in your message so they can understand why they are receiving a message from you.

In your contact tracking system, keep a record of responses you receive.

### Part B

From your list, select three individuals to have an in-depth conversation about their career experience, as well as career or life advice they have for you. Consider the 5Ws and H when planning for these conversations:

- **Who** would you like to invite to have a career conversation?
- **Why** have you selected these individuals? Consider their experience, knowledge, interests,
- **What** do you intend to talk about? Prepare a list of questions to ask in advance.
- **Where** and **when** would be convenient for the individuals to talk with you? As you are asking them for a favour, be respectful of their time and availability.
- **How** will you follow up and show gratitude during and after the conversation? Consider following up with a personal thank you message, and how you can stay in touch after.

True story: the EDUC 4100 student mentioned in the previous section was successful in connecting with the Chief Meteorologist, who invited her to the network studio to conduct her information interview AND watch him report the weather forecast live!





### COMPONENT 3: Reflect on your experience

Reflecting on the tasks you conducted for this project, answer the following questions in any of these formats:

- a written paper (3-4 pages excluding appendices)
- a video (3-4 minutes in duration)
- an infographic, or
- a class presentation (3-4 minutes in duration) on the assignment due date

If you have other submission formats in mind, please seek instructor approval two weeks prior to the assignment due date.

#### *Reflection Questions*

1. What did you learn from creating your career contacts and reaching out to them?
2. Who did you have in-depth conversations with? What did you hope to learn from them?
3. Describe the key takeaways from these conversations. What confirmed the things you already knew? What troubled or surprised you?
4. How did these conversations help you confirm your career options and goals and/or challenged your direction?
5. How did these conversations relate back to your identified sustainable development goal(s)? (/2)
6. What questions remain for you? Who would you interview next and why?

### COMPONENT 4: Connect with your career contacts

The final component of this assignment requires you to create a LinkedIn profile. Ensure your LinkedIn profile has the following:

- A high quality, professional profile photo
- A detailed summary – at least three to four descriptive sentences
- An Education section
- An Experience section which may include both work and volunteer experiences
- A Skill section that features at least five skills
- Make at least five connections (one of which can be your instructor)

How you describe yourself and promote your skills and experiences will influence how you are perceived by others. Therefore, you will also need to consider your target audience; for instance, are you hoping to attract potential employers, or to impress graduate school selection committees? Put yourself in their shoes when crafting your profile and think about what they look for in ideal applicants.

