



WORK LEARN | WINTER 2024



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I found out about the Development Project Assistant with the Faculty of Medicine position on Careers Online. Like a lot of students, I was doing a scramble when jobs got posted, looking through all the jobs and favoriting the ones that interested me the most. I gained valuable experience as an NSERC Undergraduate Research Award recipient last summer, working as a research assistant. My responsibilities included data entry, filing, organization, and digital communications, all of which translated well to the Work Learn position, where there was a lot of overlap in required skills.

What initially drew me to the job posting was the opportunity for creative input, especially in designing holiday cards. I was excited by the chance to engage with donors and contribute to the Faculty of Medicine's mission of transforming healthcare for everyone. While I actually didn't end up designing the holiday card, I found the other

creative opportunities I participated in to be incredibly fulfilling and meaningful.

I'm studying Neuroscience, which I wouldn't say directly applies to this role but if I've learned anything, it's that your field of study doesn't always define your career path. My background never felt like a limitation. If anything, it was kind of fun to be able to talk about my Neuroscience studies in a department within the Faculty of Medicine and also gave me a unique perspective and set of strengths that I was able to apply effectively in my role. During my role it was pretty manageable to balance my club commitments and classes with my job. I had very understanding supervisors who understood that I was a full time student and were very accommodating of my class schedule and exams. I worked in a hybrid role where I was in the office once or twice a week and the rest of my shifts were remote. If I had any issues or I wasn't able to keep up with something, there were very open lines of communication where I could ask for support.

One thing I really took away from this role is learning how important it is to seek clarification. If you're unsure about something, asking about it will be ten times better than realizing you were not supposed to do something a certain way after the fact. Even if it's your first time in a role, asking for help is admirable and encouraged in a lot of work places. People want to help you and see you succeed so don't be afraid to ask questions. Clarifying steps for projects is important too because the way you do things



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may not be clear to another person and people really appreciate when you take time to explain what steps you're taking to solve a problem. The role I was in required the use of a new software I had not used before that tracked donor communication and information, so I asked a lot of questions, which taught me how to approach learning something new. I would observe others, watch tutorials, do a lot of demos and practice which really helped me get over this learning curve.

People often say that communication is key, but I've learned that how you communicate- your delivery, is just as important. If your message isn't clear or isn't received the way you intended, it likely won't have the impact you hoped for. Whether in meetings or emails, I've learned to pause, reflect, and consider not just *what* I want to say, but *how* I say it to ensure it's understood. Since people come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, it's essential to be mindful and intentional in your communication. One important habit I developed was thinking carefully and sometimes checking with others before sending key messages or emails—taking that extra step often made a big difference.

One connection I see between my academics and my role is that office hours help and the same is true for working in an office. Asking people for help and getting to know them really helps you succeed. The advice I have for anyone interested in Work Learn is don't reject yourself. The worst that can happen is you apply and you don't get the position. Everyone has been rejected from a job at least once, the world is not going to end if you don't get a position. The Career Centre is available to help you improve your chances with your next application. Don't be the one to say "I'm not qualified." Sometimes we have an internal "no" to overcome. I really tried to become comfortable with the process and that I would experience some rejection as a part of the process. Apply as soon as you can! What you put in is what you'll get out of it. If you put in good effort into the jobs you want, you'll see much better results.