

Schulich

Global Alumni Network

Student Guidelines

Schulich Alumni Coffee Chats

Informal one-on-one conversation over coffee

The objective of a coffee chat conversation is to connect students with Schulich alumni to enhance your communication skills, build your network and receive professional insights.

Coffee chats allow you to create connections to help you assess your professional goals. Whether you are thinking about a career switch or looking to pursue a new career path, speaking with alumni can assist you in making your decision. *A coffee chat should not be viewed as a job placement opportunity.*

Below are some guidelines to help you get the most out of your conversation.

Before the Coffee Chat

Duration and Location

The duration of the coffee chat should be approximately 30 minutes or less and should be held at a mutually convenient time and place or virtual platform.

The beverage does not need to be a coffee but should be a drink that takes the same amount of time to consume as a cup of coffee.

Etiquette

Your Role: As the student, please initiate your outreach to schedule and coordinate the coffee chat.

Be On Time: Assess traffic conditions and location in advance so that you can arrive early. Test devices and software giving yourself time to troubleshoot. Never be late.

Respect Their Time: Keep your networking date on a schedule. If you requested a 30-minute coffee chat, then you should wrap things up in the appropriate time. During the chat, even if you are in the middle of a fruitful conversation, stop and ask the alumna/alumnus if they have to leave. If they agree to keep chatting, great. If not, you should end the conversation there. The alumna/alumnus will be appreciative of your reminder to keep them on schedule.

Attire: Dress in business attire unless specifically told not to. It is better to be overdressed than under dressed.

If meeting in person, be hospitable and offer to pay for the alumna/alumnus

Preparation

Prepare in advance for the coffee chat in order to maximize the full benefit of the conversation. Your time is limited, so keep to your agenda.

Do Your Research: Attend the coffee chat with a prepared agenda outlining conversation topics and/or questions. Identify your goals for what you want to get out of the conversation. Goals can include:

- Understanding project work at an organization
- Gaining insights on organizational culture
- Exploring student opportunities at an organization (i.e. volunteering, internships etc.)
- Learning job search strategy tips

During the Coffee Chat

Take Notes: Make notes during the conversation in particular, action items or follow-ups.

Focus on Developing the Relationship: One conversation with someone doesn't solidify a relationship, it takes time and personal interest to successfully connect with others. Invest in getting to know the alumna/alumnus and value the opportunity to learn as much as you can.

Be professional: Keep the conversation light, remember this is an informal interaction. Most of your conversation will focus on professional topics (work experience, job roles, industry insights etc.), however you can casually chat about hobbies, interests and passions to build a personal connection.

Alumni will be able to tell if you're only interested in finding a job or if you're truly looking to connect with them. Show personal interest by actively listening and asking questions.

After the Coffee Chat

Thank You: Send an e-mail or hand written note after the coffee chat to thank and show your appreciation for the time the alumna/alumnus has given.

Follow-up: If there are any action items from your conversation, follow up in a day or two. In the follow up, be sure to deliver on anything you promised and keep the alumna/alumnus apprised of any progress you have made as a result of their advice. If the alumna/alumnus has made a promise (i.e. colleague introductions, sharing an article etc.) please gently remind them.

Keep in Touch: If you established a good connection, consider ways that you can continue the relationship such as i.e. attending an alumni event, scheduling another coffee chat.

How the Coffee Chat Program Works

Matching Process

- Students will receive detailed instructions on how to connect with alumni coffee chat mentors at the Mentorship Program Student Orientation.
- The online community will facilitate your mentorship match. Access to the community will be granted after the orientation.

- Sign-in to the Schulich Alumni Community (www.schulichalumniconnect.com) and browse the alumni directory. Using the “Filter People By” section, expand the “Mentoring” tab, check “**Coffee Chat with a Student**” and view profiles of alumni. You can further isolate your search by industry, organization, and/or location. Select one alumna/alumnus who you would like to be your mentor. Send a request by clicking “Request mentoring”. Write a message introducing yourself and explain why you are requesting mentorship. The alumna/alumnus will receive your message and respond.
- If the alumna/alumnus accepts your request, begin corresponding with her/him to schedule your first meeting.
- If the alumna/alumnus declines your request, contact mentorship@schulich.yorku.ca for further assistance.

It is your responsibility to follow through on all coffee chat invitations. You can only send one coffee chat request at a time. If you do not hear a response from your request in three (3) business days, please e-mail mentorship@schulich.yorku.ca for further assistance.

Noncompliance with program guidelines will result in suspension from the online community.

Making the Coffee Chat Request

When messaging, be clear and concise about why you are requesting a meeting. A reminder to do your research before you message alumni.

When making the request, give alumni two or three time slots that work for you and let them pick the option that best fits their schedule.

If your coffee chat is more than a week away, send a confirmation e-mail the day before to remind them of the appointment and to confirm they are still available to meet.

Points to include in your Coffee Chat Invitation

1. Address the alumna/alumnus by name
2. Introduce yourself (i.e. degree, graduation year, specialization, industry of interest etc.)
3. State the reason you selected the alumna/alumnus for a coffee chat (i.e. “I can see from your alumni profile that you made a similar career switch after completing your MBA...”)
4. Request a 30 minute coffee chat and provide two or three potential time slots
5. Sign your full name with your e-mail and phone number

Feedback

At the conclusion of your Coffee Chat interaction, please provide us with your feedback. Your feedback is confidential and will be used only to improve our program as well as give the Alumni Engagement office the opportunity to thank alumni for helping our students.

** Document updated in December 2022*