



CAREER COACH HANDBOOK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Overview & Purpose of Career Conversations

Career Conversations Reading Guide

Your Role as a Career Coach

Career Conversations Sessions Guide

What to Expect as a Career Coach

Preparing for Your Session

Policies and Guidelines

About HIEC & The Ontario Career Lab

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE OF CAREER CONVERSATIONS

Thank you for joining the Ontario Career Lab as a Career Coach as we transform the way Grade 9 and 10 students discover their futures! Funded by the Government of Ontario, this first-of-its-kind initiative introduces students to a wide variety of career paths they might not have considered. It bridges classroom learning with practical, real-world skills and offers relatable role models from the community to guide young people.

Early, meaningful career conversations are essential to help students recognize their potential and explore a broad spectrum of opportunities. In this initiative, our purpose and goals include:



- **Broadening Horizons:** Introducing students to diverse career pathways and industries beyond the traditional classroom curriculum.
- **Connecting Learning to Real-World Skills:** Bridging classroom learning with the world of work, by connecting students with individuals from a variety of career backgrounds and pathways.
- **Empowering Informed Decision-Making:** Equipping students with the information and confidence they need to make educated choices about their education and career plans.
- **Providing Relatable Role Models:** Offering students access to professionals who share their real-world experiences, challenges, and successes, making the future of work more tangible.
- **Enhancing Confidence and Aspiration:** Inspiring students through authentic, two-way conversations that encourage them to envision a future aligned with their unique talents and interests.



ADDITIONAL CAREER COACH MATERIALS



Review our [Frequently Asked Questions](#)



Watch our [Career Coach Overview Video](#)



Read our Blog Post: [How Career Conversations are Empowering Young People for a Brighter Future](#)



Read our Blog Post: [Don't Be Discouraged: The Quiet Power of Career Conversations](#)



Read our Blog Post: [The Career Advice No One Gave You in High School](#)



Read our Blog Post: [What Students Are Saying: The Most Common Takeaways from Our Mentorship Sessions](#)

YOUR ROLE AS A CAREER COACH



Role Overview:

As a Career Coach, you play a key role in helping Grade 9 and 10 students explore their options. At this stage, they are just beginning to think about their future, and your real-world insights can make different pathways feel tangible and achievable.

Your personal journey helps students connect their interests and skills to real-world opportunities, showing them how different industries operate and how careers take shape within them.

Key Responsibilities

- **Share Your Story** – Provide an engaging and relatable overview of your career journey.
- **Explain Your Path** – Discuss the steps you took, the challenges you faced, and key moments that shaped your career.
- **Encourage Interaction** – Invite student questions and foster reflective discussions.
- **Offer Practical Insights** – Share advice and lessons learned that can help students navigate their own career exploration.

Your conversation will inspire students to think about their future with confidence and show them that career paths are not always linear—but they are full of opportunities!

Prepare for a Conversation, Not a Presentation

This session is designed to be an open and engaging conversation rather than a formal presentation. No slides or visuals are needed—just be ready to share your experiences naturally. The goal is to spark curiosity, answer questions, and encourage students to explore possibilities.

PREPARING FOR YOUR SESSION

The following section is designed to help you prepare for your role as a Career Coach during the session. Use it as a checklist and reference to ensure you're ready to inspire and engage students effectively.



REVIEW YOUR JOURNEY

Reflecting on and organizing your experiences will help you craft an authentic and inspiring narrative. Use the following prompts to flesh out your story:

- **Background, Education & Early Interests:**

- Describe where your academic journey began. Which schools did you attend? What subjects or activities sparked your interest? Consider early influences such as inspiring teachers, family encouragement, or extracurricular activities that hinted at your future path.

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- **Career Path:**

- Identify major choices that significantly influenced your direction—such as accepting your first job or switching industries.
- Reflect on pivotal moments when your path changed course. What events or opportunities prompted these shifts?
- Highlight specific roles or projects that offered significant learning opportunities.

- **Learning Moments:**

- Identify key insights gained from both struggles and triumphs. Consider how mentorship, continuous learning, or self-reflection influenced your journey.

PREPARING FOR YOUR SESSION



IDENTIFY KEY TAKEAWAYS

Reflect on your journey to extract lessons that can benefit students starting their own career paths. Here are some examples:

- **Embrace Lifelong Learning:** Continuous learning and skill development are essential for career growth.
- **Resilience is Key:** Setbacks are inevitable. Share how bouncing back from failures built your strength.
- **Value Mentorship and Networking:** Seek advice from mentors and build professional relationships that open doors.
- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Remain open to change; career paths are rarely linear. Be willing to pivot when new opportunities emerge.
- **Trust Your Instincts:** Listen to your inner voice when making decisions. Sometimes, the best opportunities come from trusting your gut.
- **Balance Passion with Practicality:** Align what you love with market realities to achieve both personal fulfillment and professional success.
- **Self-Reflection is Essential:** Regularly reflect on your experiences to recognize growth areas and learn from both successes and setbacks.
- **Patience and Persistence:** Success often requires time and consistent effort—even in the face of obstacles.

PREPARING FOR YOUR SESSION



REFLECT ON YOUR INDUSTRY

- **Evolution of the Industry:**
 - How has the industry evolved during your career? Consider technological advancements, regulatory shifts, or market changes.
- **Emerging Trends:**
 - Identify changes in consumer demands, technology, or business models.
 - Share how these trends are influencing opportunities and challenges in your field.
- **Opportunities and Challenges:**
 - Discuss areas within your industry that are growing and the types of skills in high demand.
 - Highlight new avenues or emerging niches that might intrigue students.
 - Acknowledge obstacles individuals in your field may encounter and share strategies for overcoming them.
- **Impact on Your Career:**
 - Explain how industry changes influenced your career decisions.
 - Discuss whether shifts in the industry opened new pathways or required you to adapt.
- **Advice for Students:**
 - Suggest ways to gain exposure (e.g., internships, mentorships, industry events).
 - Share advice on the skills and knowledge crucial for success in your industry.

PREPARING FOR YOUR SESSION



PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

- **Crafting Your Narrative:**

- Combine the elements above into a coherent and engaging narrative. Strive for a balance between honest reflection about challenges and enthusiasm about your achievements.

- **Practice and Reflection:**

- Rehearse your story until it comes naturally. Consider drafting a timeline or bullet points to visualize the key stages of your journey, and ask a trusted colleague or mentor for feedback.

- **Remember, this is a conversation, not a presentation.**

- Focus on creating an open dialogue where students feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their thoughts. Aim for a natural, engaging exchange rather than a scripted speech.





POLICIES AND GUIDELINES



[Career Coach Code of Conduct](#)



[Confidentiality Policy](#)



[Workplace Against Violence, Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#)



[Child Abuse Neglect and Prevention Policy](#)

If you have any questions about the policies and guidelines related to HIEC, this project, or the role of the Career Coach, please reach out to careercoaches@hiec.on.ca.



ABOUT HIEC & THE ONTARIO CAREER LAB

The Ontario Career Lab is a project of HIEC, a not-for-profit social enterprise dedicated to partnership, mentorship, and workforce development. With 35 years of experience, we develop and deliver innovative programs and services that leverage technology, drive community collaboration, and inspire mentorship to help young people succeed in their career journeys. Our mission is to empower youth to explore career pathways, strengthen their mental wellness, and create opportunities for future success.

HIEC is a trusted partner for educators and community agencies, known for facilitating workshops on career education, skilled trades, apprenticeship, and pathways planning. Our long-standing commitment to extending learning beyond the classroom has made us a valuable bridge between small, medium, and large employers, industry associations, and educational institutions.