

Canadian Workplace Success

Acculturation Workshop

What is Acculturation?

Acculturation means to acquire the knowledge and skills to be able to adjust to the expectations and social patterns of a new cultural setting. This was what happened when you entered college in Canada, and it will happen again when you enter a Canadian workplace – you will need to learn the culture and expectations of the new environment.

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Purpose of a Placement

Why does your college program require you to participate in a field placement?

What are the benefits of participating in a placement?

Barriers to Your Workplace Success

What are the possible challenges to your success during your placement?

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Knowledge Barriers	Understanding the expectations of your employer as well as your rights and responsibilities as an employee in a Canadian organization.
Communication Barriers	Improving your English skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) to better understand and respond to the requirements of your workplace.

Workplace Culture

	International	Canadian
Punctuality		
Professional Boundaries		
Team Work		
Individual Contribution		
Communication		
Confidentiality		

Canadian Cultural Values

- **Individualism** – Boldness and originality. Individual contribution is respected.
- **Equality** – Respect towards others; all people/ideas are equally valuable
- **Informality** – A casual attitude is not equal to a lack of respect. (e.g. using your boss' first name is fine if invited to do so)
- **Punctuality** – Be on time, or let the person know ahead of the agreed time that you will be late or not able to make the appointment. Show respect for other peoples' time.

Are any of the main values in your culture different from the main Canadian values?
 Are there any values in your culture that are not listed above?

Rights and Responsibilities during Your Placement

- **During your placement you are viewed as a new employee-in-training**
- **You have the same rights as any employee in the workplace – health/safety**
- **You are responsible for accuracy in your work – ask questions when you are not certain**

Canadian Employers' values

Understanding and meeting these expectations will help you succeed in your placement.

Look at the following employee skills and qualities. What are the most 3 most important?

	<i>Proficiency with computer software programs</i>
	<i>Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work</i>
	<i>Ability to make decisions and solve problems</i>
	<i>Ability to work in a team structure</i>
	<i>Technical knowledge related to the job</i>
	<i>Ability to obtain and process information</i>
	<i>Ability to analyze data</i>
	<i>Ability to verbally communicate with people (internal and external)</i>

Source: *Job Outlook 2012*, National Association of Colleges and Employers

Professionalism in Workplace Communication

During your placement you will be expected to behave and communicate in a professional manner. Here are some points to remember:

- **Listen actively – ask questions for clarification, make appropriate eye contact**
- **Speak clearly – speak slower (careful pronunciation); use a clear voice (stress nouns, verbs and adjectives); use direct, honest, respectful language**
- **Choose an appropriate time to ask for (or offer) advice/ideas**
- **Be prepared – review notes, procedures; have a professional appearance, and good personal hygiene**
- **Cross-cultural communication requires patience – there is a potential for people to misunderstand your tone, gestures, or language, as well as a potential for you to misunderstand theirs**

Effective workplace communication does not only require the correct vocabulary, but also an understanding of the cultural context.

Email Communication

When communicating by Email in the workplace, professionalism is expected. Here are some ideas to guide you, followed by a more detailed explanation.

- **Be brief and specific**
- **Have a clear, meaningful subject-line**
- **Use a formal tone**
- **Check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors**
- **Use clear, easy to read fonts**
- **Use professional, formal language**
- **Remember emails may be read by more than the intended recipient**

Professionalism in Email Communication

Email has become an invaluable communication tool in most academic and professional settings. The tone, format, length, and content of the email message must suit the intended audience and the purpose of the communication.

Professionalism in Email Communication (continued)

The following guidelines can help you communicate your email message clearly and effectively:

- **Use language that is professional and appropriate.** Unlike in a face-to-face conversation where body language and tone of voice can help convey the intended meaning, the tone in an email message is conveyed through the choice of vocabulary and format of the message.
- **Consider your audience.** Most professors and other professionals prefer a formal tone, so avoid the use of slang, MSN language, contractions, too many abbreviations, and emoticons.
- **Address the recipient formally** unless you are certain informality is acceptable.
- **Include a clear, meaningful subject line.** If the recipient knows briefly what the email is about, he/she is more likely to read it and respond to it.
- **Use traditional, easy to read typefaces** such as Times New Roman and Garamond. Avoid typing in UPPERCASE as it can be interpreted as shouting. *Italics* can add emphasis, but should be used sparingly. Using **bold** too frequently can be seen as aggressive.
- **Keep emails relatively short and to the point.** Avoid overly long sentences and dense paragraphs. They are harder to follow in electronic format. Readers who have to scroll down to get the entire message may find it too time consuming. Try to include only one topic in an email.
- **Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.** The reader is likely to treat your message or request more seriously if you can show that you have taken the time to make it error free.
- **Remember that emails may be read by more than just the intended recipient.** Your email might be forwarded to others or become part of an email chain. Email is a more permanent record of a conversation than a face-to-face meeting. Avoid sending sensitive or personal information via email since it is not a secure form of communication.
- **Be patient when waiting for a reply.** Some people check their emails infrequently.
- **Reply to emails that require a reply.** Answer all questions that were asked of you and try to anticipate follow-up questions. Sign your name and provide contact information.
- **Double-check the content and tone of your message before sending it.** Check the 'To' line to make sure you haven't accidentally included someone other than the intended recipient(s). Re-read your email one final time, and imagine what your reaction might be if you received it. Make changes if necessary.

References

University of Toronto. Email etiquette. Retrieved October 21, 2008, from <http://www.enough.utoronto.ca/computeruse/eetiquette.htm>
Zilm, G., & Entwistle, C. (2002). *The smart way: An introduction to writing for nurses* (2nd ed.). Toronto: W.B. Saunders.

Qualities of an Effective Employee

The following is a list of qualities that can help to make you more valuable to your employer – during your placement and in your future career.

- **Demonstrate reliability**
- **Communicate effectively – express thoughts and ideas clearly, directly, honestly and with respect for others**
- **Use active listening strategies**
- **Participate actively**
- **Do more than you are required to**
- **Be flexible**
- **Be respectful towards others**

The Importance of this Placement as it Relates to Your Future

Your placement is not only an opportunity to practice the concepts and skills learned from classes in a real-world setting, but it is also an opportunity to learn about the Canadian workplace and develop knowledge and skills about how to be successful in your career.

Additionally, it is a place where you can form professional relationships with people in your chosen industry – people who may be able to help you with information in the future or provide you with job references. Forming these professional connections is called, “Networking”, and it is a very important part of searching for a job.