

Investigating: Interactions (Pathway 2: Understanding My Industry)

This form is for students who are following Pathway 2: Understanding My Industry.

For Project Pathway 2: Understanding My Industry, you will need to meet (interact) with an expert in your industry. Use this form to plan and document your learning, and be sure to consult the rubric (available in the Interactions dropbox).

Your group needs to fill out one copy of this form. Each student in your group needs to help plan the interview, attend it, and help complete the reflection section.

Here are the steps you can take to complete this assignment:

- schedule your informational interview.
- complete the **Part 1: Plan your Interaction** section of this form.
- get feedback on your Part 1 section during an in-class activity.
- revise part 1 as needed, and document your feedback and changes by completing **Part 2: Get Feedback and Revise**.
- participate in your informational interview.
- complete **Part 3: Reflect on your Interaction**.
- submit this form to the Interactions Dropbox.

Project Deliverables	
1	Proposal and Plan
2	Investigating: Research
3	Investigating: Interactions (Pathway 2: Understanding My Industry)
4	Deliverable/Reflection

For this assignment, interviewees must have professional experience in your target industry and location. No personal informational interviews (parents, siblings, cousins, uncles, etc.) for this assignment, please.

When you want to interview someone to learn from them, it is very important that you:

- explain why you want to speak to them in writing and in person (including why you want to meet, what you hope to learn, and what your goals are).
- do not ask for more than 15 minutes of your interviewee's time to respect their busy schedule.
- get consent in advance if you want to record the interview.

Part 1: Plan your Interaction

Set Goals

Setting specific goals will help you make the best use of your limited time with the interviewee. Your goals for your interaction should connect with some of the goals that you established in your Proposal and Plan assignment, go beyond what you have learned from the COMM-2172 classes and readings, and take into account feedback that you have received on your JRC first submissions.

Answer these questions to help you prepare for your interaction.

Who are you interviewing? Include their name, job title, and organization.	We plan to interview Samuel Lount, an IT manager, and developer at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba.
Briefly describe their experience and/or areas of expertise.	<p>The interviewee has over 18 years of professional experience in IT and software development roles, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 years and 5 months as an IT Manager at The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba.• 3 years and 3 months as a Senior Software Developer (consultant).• 4 years and 11 months as a Software Developer.• 3 years and 3 months as a Web Developer. <p>Their areas of expertise include IT management, enterprise software development, consulting, software design and infrastructure, as well as application frameworks and enterprise solution design, using tools like Microsoft SQL Server and Blazor.</p>
When and where will your interaction take place?	We interviewed the interviewee at Tim Hortons on Grant Avenue on Saturday, the 8th, between 2:00 PM and 3:00 PM.

<p>What are your goals for the interaction? If members of your group have different goals, please note that.</p>	<p>Feng:</p> <p>My goal for this interaction is to learn about the daily tasks of IT professionals, the tools and technologies they use, and the technical and communication skills expected from new graduates. I also want to understand what I need to improve in my career.</p> <p>Mark:</p> <p>My goal for this interaction is to learn about the daily responsibilities and workflows in software development roles, specifically focusing on what employers look for in co-op students and new graduates. I want to understand which technical skills and tools are most valued in the workplace so I can prioritize them in my portfolio projects and GitHub contributions. I also want to learn about the professional communication and collaboration practices used in development teams, so I can better prepare myself for interviews and demonstrate that I'm ready to contribute effectively from day one.</p>
<p>How do these goals align with the three goals that you established in your Proposal and Plan? Please include reference to each group member's individual goals.</p>	<p>Feng:</p> <p>This interaction directly supports all three of my learning goals. Firstly, it aligns with goal #1 because understanding real IT work will enable me to provide more precise and confident answers in interviews, especially when using STAR, BAR, or SOAR to describe tasks, tools, teamwork, and problem-solving. Secondly, it supports goal #2 because learning about the technologies and expectations of developers helps me identify the skills I need to improve, such as programming languages, development tools, and</p>

	<p>industry practices. Finally, it aligns with goal #3 because this type of research prepares me for future informational interviews and enhances my communication confidence when discussing real-world workplace tasks and expectations with professionals.</p> <p>Mark:</p> <p>This interaction directly supports Goal #3: "Before the end of this course, I will expand my professional network by connecting with people in the tech industry through in-person events like Tech Thursdays or RRC networking sessions and through LinkedIn outreach."</p> <p>This informational interview is exactly the type of networking conversation I committed to having. By documenting what I learn about co-op expectations and workplace practices, I'm gathering insights to prepare stronger job applications.</p> <p>It also aligns with Goal #1 about improving my GitHub portfolio. Understanding which technical skills and tools co-op employers value will help me choose meaningful projects that demonstrate workplace readiness rather than just academic exercises.</p> <p>Finally, it supports Goal #2 in regard to my resume and cover letter. Learning about real-world job expectations and specific technologies used professionally will give me concrete keywords like JavaScript frameworks, version control, and databases to incorporate into my documents, ensuring they reflect what co-op employers look for.</p>
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How do your goals for this interaction build on what you have learned from your COMM-2172 classes and readings already?	These goals for this interaction build on what I have already learned in my COMM-2172 classes because the course has taught me how to communicate clearly, ask effective questions, and reflect on my learning. In class, I learned strategies for professional communication, how to structure answers, and how to prepare for workplace interactions. The readings also showed me how to analyze information, understand workplace expectations, and improve my speaking confidence. Using these skills, I can now explore in more depth by learning about real IT tasks, tools, and expectations. This interaction allows me to put into practice what I learned in class in a real-world situation, thereby strengthening my communication skills and preparing me for future professional conversations.
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Prepare your questions

What do you really want to know from the people you may one day be working with? What insights do you think they can share with you?

You have set some goals based on the feedback you receive about your Job Ready Communication, and these goals build on what you have learned already in the course. Now it's time to create some questions that can help you reach your goals.

Prepare five questions to ask during your meeting. Use open-ended questions when possible, and list your questions in order of priority. You do not need to stick to these questions if the interview goes in an unexpected direction and you do not need to ask all the questions.

Your interview should not extend beyond 15 minutes but must not fall too short either (less than 10 minutes) as this will appear unprepared and unprofessional.

Question 1:

Can you describe a typical workday for you, including the main tasks, tools, and types of teamwork involved?

Question 2:

From your experience, what technical and communication-related skills do new graduates need to succeed in this role or in the industry?
Question 3: What advice would you give someone who wants to grow in this field, especially in the first few years of their career?
Question 4: What are the most common challenges or mistakes you've seen new graduates or co-op students face when transitioning into professional development work, and how can I prepare to avoid them?
Question 5: How do you see this industry evolving over the next few years, and what emerging technologies or trends should students start learning now to stay competitive?

Part 2: Get Feedback and Revise

To get the most out of your interaction, your instructor will set up an in-class opportunity for you to get some feedback on the goals and questions that you developed in Part 1. Document your feedback and revisions here:

Who gave you feedback?	Constance and Katsia
What strengths did they identify?	They mentioned that we did elaborate the experience of the interviewee and we are able to relate our goals in starting the career in the IT Field
What areas for improvement did they identify?	Developed

What changes did you make to Part 1 as a result of your feedback? Get specific, quoting your initial and revised goals and questions.	No changes made
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Part 3: Reflect on your Interaction

Interview Notes

Make notes during your informational interview with an industry professional. Use a numbered list to organize them by question, adding in any additional or follow-up questions that you asked.

1. Can you describe a typical workday for you, including the main tasks, tools, and types of teamwork involved?

A typical day usually begins with a stand-up meeting where everyone shares what they worked on the previous day, what they plan to do today, and if they have any blockers. Most of my tasks involve writing code, fixing bugs, reviewing pull requests, and testing features. Tools like GitHub, Jira, Slack, and VS Code are used daily. We elaborate a lot through pair programming or team discussions, especially when planning new features or solving complex technical issues

2. From your experience, what technical and communication-related skills do new graduates need to succeed in this role or in the industry?

Technically, new graduates should be proficient in at least one programming language and be able to read existing code. Knowledge of Git, debugging, APIs, and unit testing is also very helpful. But communication is just as important—you need to explain your ideas clearly, ask questions when you are unsure, and give honest but respectful feedback during code reviews. Being able to work with others, stay organized, and communicate progress makes a big difference.

3. What advice would you give someone who wants to grow in this field, especially in the first few years of their career?

My advice is to stay curious and keep learning. Technology changes fast, so try to improve your skills every month, whether through online courses or small side projects. Don't be afraid to ask questions, especially early on. Take responsibility for your tasks, communicate clearly with your team, and learn from code reviews. Also, try to build a strong professional network—it can help you find mentors and future opportunities.

4. What are the most common challenges or mistakes you've seen new graduates or co-op students face when transitioning into professional development work, and how can I prepare to avoid them?

New grads often treat production systems like school labs, wanting to 'just try' or test directly in production. This can be particularly risky in healthcare, as it may compromise physician data or patient information. An outage could impact licensing or services. Learning proper change management, staging, and rollback is sacred in Production.

DevOps is more than just about code - it's about connecting development and operations, often translating technical issues for non-technical stakeholders like our Registrar or Council members. New grads sometimes find it hard to communicate status updates, explain outages, or advocate for technical needs to leadership — so practice explaining technical concepts to non-technical audiences. Learn to write clear incident reports and status updates.

5. How do you see this industry evolving over the next few years, and what emerging technologies or trends should students start learning now to stay competitive?

The DevOps landscape is evolving rapidly, particularly in the IT sector. The primary shifts I observe include the shift to cloud-native and hybrid cloud setups with strict data residency needs for Canadian healthcare data, the incorporation of AI/ML processes for everything from credential checks to fraud detection, and the move towards zero-trust security models as traditional perimeter defences become outdated.

To remain competitive, students should gain practical experience with modern observability tools, security automation, and industry-specific technologies like FHIR standards for health data interoperability. The demand for DevOps professionals who understand both advanced technology and regulated environments is increasing in Manitoba's healthcare sector.

Summarize and Reflect on your interaction

Write a 1-2 paragraph reflection using the questions below to help you.

- What did you learn in this interaction? Give specific examples.
- How will you use this information? For example, how will you use it to adapt your Job Ready Communication or move your career forward?

In this interaction, we learned how real-world IT environments differ from the controlled lab work I do at school. The IT Manager explained that production systems require strict change management, proper rollback planning, and constant awareness of compliance requirements, such as PHIA. We also realized that documentation is not just a final step but an ongoing professional practice—everything from meaningful commit messages to runbooks and decision logs matters. Another key lesson was the importance of communication: being able to explain technical issues to non-technical stakeholders, such as the Registrar, is just as crucial as having strong technical skills. This conversation also provided me with a clearer roadmap of technologies to prioritize, including Kubernetes, Terraform, cloud platforms, and monitoring tools like Prometheus and Grafana.

We will use this information to improve both our job-search skills and professional growth. First, we plan to update our Job Ready Communication materials by highlighting my understanding of production environments, compliance standards, and secure development practices. We will incorporate these insights into interview examples and resume points that show I am ready for real workplace responsibilities. This experience has also motivated us to create a structured learning plan focused on DevOps, cloud infrastructure, and defensive security skills. Moving forward, we will apply these lessons in our home lab by establishing proper development, staging, and production workflows, practicing secrets management, and building a portfolio that demonstrates not only my technical skills but also our preparedness to operate in a secure, compliant IT environment.

Briefly indicate what your next learning steps will be. Even if it is your last interaction for the project, identify what further learning you still need.

- What are your next steps for continuous learning?
- Who would you like to meet with next, and what will your goals be for those interactions?

Our next learning steps will focus on building stronger skills in secure, production-level IT practices. We plan to continue developing my knowledge of cloud platforms, Kubernetes, Terraform, and monitoring tools so I can better understand how modern healthcare systems are deployed and maintained. I also want to strengthen my familiarity with PHIA,

PIPEDA, and secure development workflows, since these are essential for working in Manitoba's healthcare IT environment. Although this may be our last interaction for the project, we recognize that we still need more hands-on experience with DevOps automation, secrets management, and creating comprehensive documentation sets for real-world infrastructure.

For ongoing learning, our next steps include expanding our home lab to better simulate development, staging, and production environments, earning relevant cloud or security certifications, and creating portfolio projects that showcase secure and compliant deployments. Moving forward, we aim to meet with another IT professional or a DevOps engineer to gain deeper insights into CI/CD pipelines, DevOps practices, and daily IT workflows. Our goal for these interactions is to ask targeted questions about operational challenges, security expectations, and career growth, so we can continue to improve our technical skills and communication in this field.

Post-Interview

You will not be graded on the post-interview thank you email, but you should ABSOLUTELY send one within 48 hours. Following up in this way can help strengthen the networking connection you have made. Here's a sample thank you email:

Pyramid Structure	Contents	Sample
Summary and Context	Who/what/where/when/why of the email and interview session	Thank you for meeting with [me/us] on [date] to talk about [x]. It was great learning more about [the general goal of the interview]
Details	Summary of what you learned and its value to you/your team	The information you shared about [some specific detail you learned] will be valuable to [me/us] and [how you might use that information in your employment search/workplace]
Outcome or Action	Request for further connection/Offer of support in the future, etc.	It would be wonderful to reconnect with you again at some time in the future. Thank you again for your time.