

Student Interview Form

Type: Semi-structured interview

Target: Off-campus student

Duration: ~10–15 minutes

Step 1: Questionnaire Warm-up

The participant completed the questionnaire before the interview.

Step 2: Interview Questions & Responses

Q1. Based on your responses, can you walk me through how you usually decide where to eat on campus?

Answer:

Since I live off campus, my decision usually starts with my class schedule. If I have class soon after eating, I try to minimize risk by choosing somewhere close and where food seems to come out quickly. I don't have much buffer time between classes, so even short unexpected waits feel stressful.

If I have more time, I'm more flexible, but I still care a lot about predictability. I usually want to feel confident that the place won't be too crowded, that there will be seating, and that the experience will be relatively smooth. Most of the time, the final decision actually happens when I arrive and see the situation in person.

Follow-up Question:

What's the first thing you notice when you arrive that makes you confirm or change your plan?

Follow-up Answer:

Usually the line length and whether there's seating. If it already looks packed or chaotic, I'll just change plans.

Q2. What are the most annoying or frustrating parts of using mobile order apps or dining services?

Answer:

Even without using the mobile order app, the most frustrating part of on-campus dining is how uncertain everything feels before I arrive. It's hard to know how busy a place will be, whether there will be seats, or what the food will actually look like.

Menus are usually text-only, which makes it difficult to picture what I'm ordering. Because of this, the information available beforehand doesn't really help me decide. I often end up arriving first and then making a decision on the spot, which wastes time—especially when I'm between classes.

Follow-up Question:

Can you give one example of information that feels unclear?

Follow-up Answer:

Food descriptions without photos. Sometimes I don't really understand what the dish is until I see it in person.

Q3. If you don't often use dining apps, what are the main reasons?

Answer:

I don't really use the UofT Mobile Order app because people around me don't use it, so it doesn't feel like something I need. If my friends aren't relying on it, I assume it probably doesn't provide much real help, so I never downloaded it.

For me, an app would only be useful if it helped me make better decisions before arriving. Since that doesn't seem to be the case, I usually just decide when I get there.

Follow-up Question:

Would you try the app if your friends started using it?

Follow-up Answer:

Probably yes. If people I know said it actually saved time or helped avoid crowded places, I'd be more willing to try it.

Q4. Can you describe a recent time when you changed your eating plan at the last minute?

Answer:

There was a time around lunch when I went to eat somewhere on campus, but when I arrived it was much more crowded than I expected. There wasn't clear seating available, and it felt like the wait would be long. I didn't want to risk being late for class, so I changed my plan and went somewhere else instead. When I switch like that, I usually choose the option that feels safest in terms of time—somewhere closer and likely faster, even if it isn't my first food choice.

Follow-up Question:

How did you choose the new place?

Follow-up Answer:

I picked somewhere nearby that looked less busy and faster, even if the food wasn't exactly what I originally wanted.

Q5. Have you ever had a payment issue? If yes, can you explain what happened and how you handled it?

Answer:

I don't usually use TCard, and I haven't had major payment failures. But sometimes I only realize at the counter that paying with cash would have been cheaper than using a card, so I miss opportunities to save money. It's not really a technical problem. It's more about not knowing the best payment option ahead of time.

Follow-up Question:

Would clearer payment information change your behavior?

Follow-up Answer:

Yes. If I knew in advance which option was cheaper, I'd definitely choose differently and might even pick a different place to eat.

Q6. When deciding whether to wait or go somewhere else, what information matters the most to you?

Answer:

Crowd level and waiting time matter the most. If it looks like I'll be waiting more than around 10–15 minutes and I have class soon, I usually leave. Seating availability is also

important, because even if food comes out fast, not having a place to sit makes the experience worse. Sometimes I also change plans if what I see doesn't match what I expected, like food availability or pricing.

Follow-up Question:

Do you have a personal "leaving threshold"?

Follow-up Answer:

Yes, if it looks like more than about 10–15 minutes of waiting when I'm short on time, I leave.

Q7. If there were a better dining app, what would you want it to help you with?

Answer:

I'd want it to reduce uncertainty before I arrive. The most useful features would be showing how busy a place is and whether there are seats available. Food photos would help a lot, and public reviews from other students would make decisions easier. Clear payment information, including things like cash versus card pricing, would also be really helpful.

Key Observations & Interviewer Notes

- **Decisions are strongly time-driven.**
 - The participant prioritizes speed and proximity, especially between classes. Waiting more than ~10–15 minutes often triggers leaving.
- **Most choices happen on site.**
 - Limited trust in pre-arrival information leads the participant to decide only after seeing crowd levels and seating in person.
- **High uncertainty creates frustration.**
 - Lack of visibility into busyness, seating, and food appearance results in frequent last-minute plan changes.
- **Menus without photos reduce confidence.**
 - Text-only menus make it hard to imagine dishes and weaken advance decision-making.
- **Dining app adoption is socially influenced.**
 - The participant avoids the UofT Mobile Order app largely because peers do not use it.

- **Payment issues are informational.**
 - While no technical failures occurred, unclear pricing differences (cash vs card) cause missed opportunities to save money.
- **Desired features focus on reducing uncertainty.**
 - Real-time crowd levels, seating availability, food photos, student reviews, and clear payment info were repeatedly emphasized.