

The Stamina of Working Students: A Guide to Human Flourishing for Students at the University of Toronto

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Will you work part-time during your studies or graduate with debt?

On one hand, working during your degree could reduce the amount of debt you owe once you graduate. On the other hand, working part-time while studying could lengthen your degree or reduce your GPA. This is not an easy question to answer, and yet, students at Canadian post-secondary institutions must frequently grapple with whether to work and study simultaneously.

Such questions highlight the fact that as students; we must make decisions that could impact anything from a grade on a midterm to the future of our degree. The working-student deserves to be recognized, and our guide aims to do that.

The impetus for this guide is the Hard-Working Student (HWS) project - a project dedicated to learning about the impacts of term-time work on studies and vice versa. The HWS project was a longitudinal mixed-methods study conducted at UT and UBC that spanned five years (2018-2022).

We collected qualitative data at the UT site, and both qualitative and quantitative data at UBC. Findings presented in this guide draw from quantitative data, representing the views of 1,732 undergraduate students in the 2018 survey and 2,987 undergraduate students in the 2019 survey, as well as qualitative data from 51 and 57 full-time and undergraduate working students at UT and UBC respectively.

In the project, the term "working-student" refers to an individual who engages in paid work of ten or more hours per week alongside studying full-time in an undergraduate degree program at a post-secondary institution.

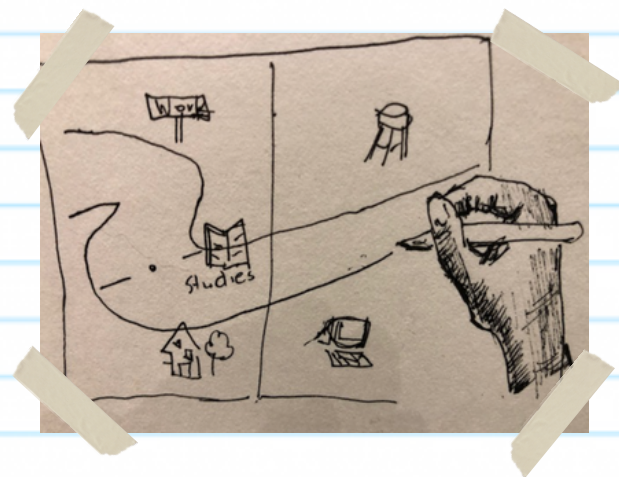
We are also looking at term-time work, which we define as paid work that students engage in during their undergraduate studies.

Throughout this guide, we share what we have learned in our study, ask you questions, and present firsthand accounts of various students who participated in the project. More and more students must work while they study, yet arguably, the university still perceives the typical undergraduate student as someone solely dedicated to their studies.

Our higher education system and governments perpetuate students' feelings of insecurity through other means, namely through tuition policies (Liu, Green and Pensiero 2016) that increase financial burdens on students and their families while disregarding the demanding schedules of working-students. The HWS results confirm that many undergraduate students juggle more than just their studies.

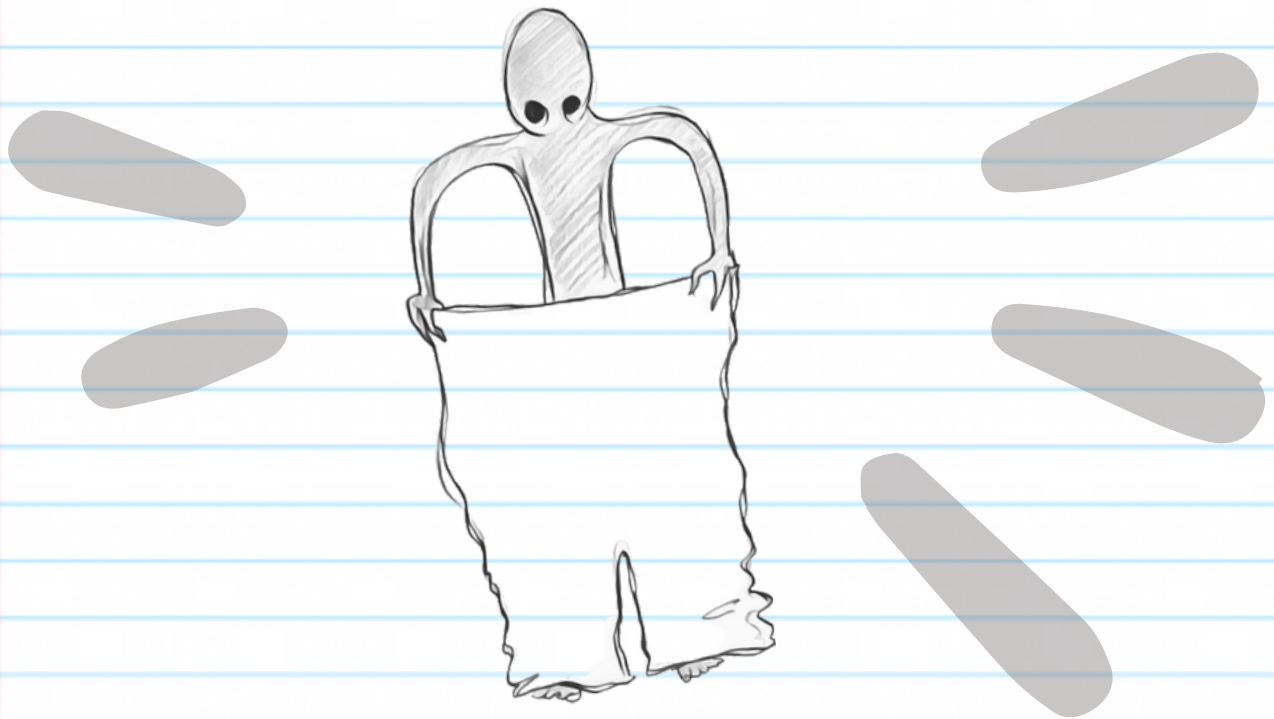
With this guide, we hope to bring awareness to the situations that hard-working students face and provide some of the tools necessary to understand the experiences of working-students in an institution that does not adequately recognize their existence.

In writing this guide, we acknowledge that all students come from different backgrounds with different life experiences, diverse goals and aspirations, and various degrees of clarity about where to go and how to get there. Factors like race, gender, or financial background, may shape how you experience institutional barriers or systemic oppression as students in the world of work.



There is no 'one-size-fits-all' when it comes to being a student - motivations will look different for everyone. It is because of this diversity that we do not propose a 'right' or 'wrong' way to be a working-student.

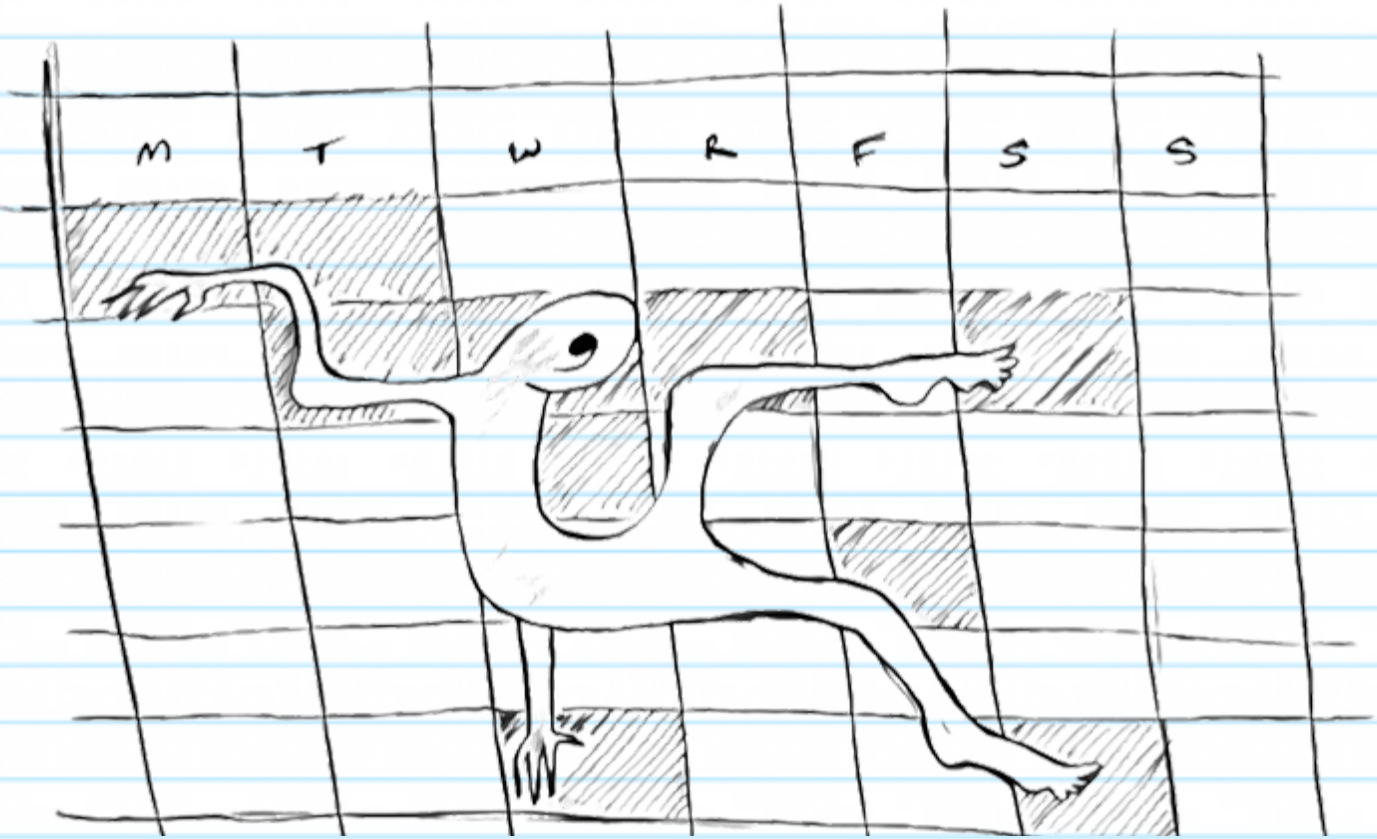
While our findings share similar themes, please take each experience as reflective of distinctive backgrounds, life histories, and intersecting identities. We encourage you to find a schedule that serves your own academic needs, fits your own work demands, and allows you time for self-care.



While this guide primarily aims to provide a sense of support for fellow working-students, we also hope that faculty and staff will consider the experiences and findings shared in this guide and reflect on how they approach students who juggle more demands than the "typical" undergraduate student.

With this in mind, we hope you enjoy the guide and learn important things about what it takes to navigate your student life as a working-person.

What does it mean to be a hard-working student?



Living as a working-student involves more than the number of hours you work or courses you take. Working-students must manage their time differently as they juggle academics, paid and/or unpaid work, social time, self-care, and much more. Part of acknowledging that you are a working-student could mean asking yourself...

Do you organize your work, study, and other commitments or do your commitments organize you?

What do you prioritize? Did you find any strategies that make juggling your schedule easier?

How do you take care of yourself or engage in self-care? What kind of supports do you have or can explore?

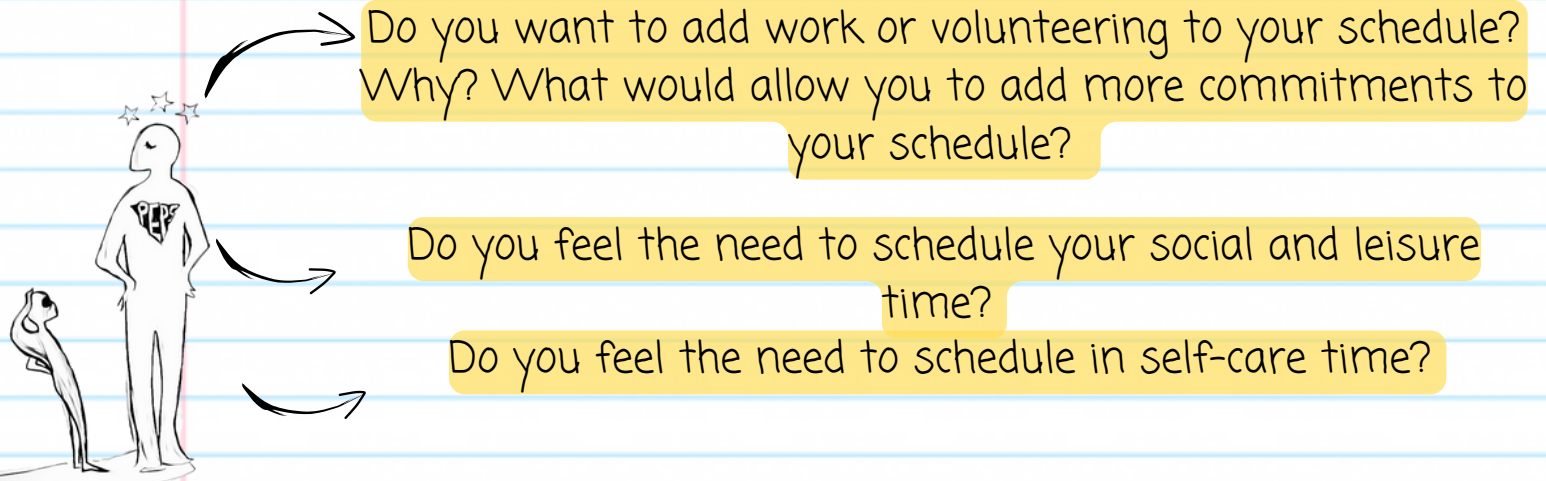
"To get anywhere in university you need to be involved in more than just classes - this is what it means to be a successful student."

- A Working-Student

Being at university can mean facing pressures to live up to the "ideal" student standard or PEPS* as we call it. If you identify as a working-student, these pressures are more extreme, and the "ideal" narrative can be less attainable. Throughout this guide, we want to encourage you to break free from the "ideal" student standard (if it is something that dictates your experiences) and recognize that there are opportunities beyond what you should do during your degree.

Productive
Employable
Planful
Student

Ask yourself...



There are many benefits and equally, many challenges that come with being a working-student. Some of the benefits might be ...

- **Increased financial stability** - whether you earn money to enjoy extra spending, keep up with bills or help your family. Term-time work can also help you pay for your tuition or graduate with less debt.
- **Social engagement/networking opportunities** - through jobs, you can make new friends or build connections with people in the community, which can present potential job opportunities.

*Credit for the clever acronym PEPS goes to Alison Taylor.



- **Personal and career growth** - through a job, you can find new areas of study or work, or even new hobbies that might interest you. You also can apply your classroom knowledge in a professional setting or think about what you study differently.
- **Increased productivity** - you may study more efficiently with more commitments in your schedule as you only have a specific amount of time that you are able to study.

"Being able to support myself and pay my bills [makes] me responsible and independent. [I]t will come in handy in later years as well, when I will be able to support me, not just me, but also my family. So, I think that respect for money and the ability to work for it and to earn it is something that I've developed from my paid work"

- A Working-Student

"I want to be financially independent because that's really important to me as well as school."

- A Working-Student

Some of the challenges include...

- **Dealing with hostile work environments or workplace inequities** - work experiences can differ for everyone, and some can face more challenges than others. Employers may also have conditions about the minimum number of hours to be worked per week and some may be less flexible about students taking time away from work - even if they need this time to prepare for exams.
- **Cause of extra stress and anxiety** - With more responsibilities to juggle, students can face greater levels of stress and anxiety and may sacrifice time for self-care or friends and family. These compromises may adversely affect a student's ability to take advantage or schedule in time for their school's clubs or academic opportunities.



- **Academic compromise** - Working-students may have to compromise between work time and academic responsibilities - this can have a negative impact on their GPA.

"I worked 21, 22 hours this week. So I just don't have time to do minimum 80 hours [of schoolwork per week] -- so [instead I have to do] 60 hours of schoolwork, 20 hours of work-work and I also have to attend all of my classes and also sleep and also eat a[n]d also feed myself. . . my sleep is bad, my mental health is bad, my eating habits are absolutely atrocious, my hygiene is degrading, my social battery -- gone." - A Working-Student

Every student will face different benefits and challenges depending on their situation. This list of general pros and cons is a starting point to consider how working alongside your studies might impact you. Other things you may wish to consider are...

What are you most concerned about as an undergraduate student and how does adding work to your schedule impact that?

How do you hope to graduate? With less or no debt? With a strong GPA?



Do you find your work energizing or draining or both? Why?

Type of Work

When we mention working-students, we often assume that we're talking about paid work. Our study shows, however, that many undergraduates participate in or feel pressure to participate in unpaid (volunteer) work. The goal of this section is to compare paid and unpaid work to give you a better understanding of the potential benefits of each and possibly help you decide where you want to allocate your time.

Paid work..

What do you want from a paid position? Money? Experience? A social hub? A break from studies? Experience outside of the 'university bubble'? Networking opportunities?

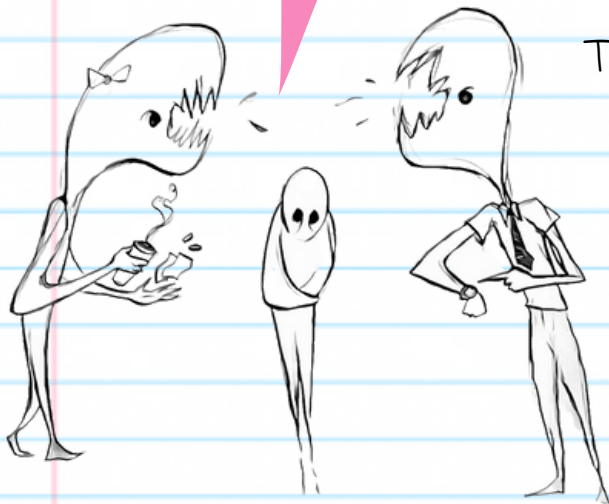
Depending on what you are looking for, certain industries might be more appealing than others. Our study found that the top three sectors that students worked in were retail, accommodation, and food and beverage service.

These industries may be more popular for students given how casual and readily available they are but there can be other reasons as well.

For example, working as a server in the food and beverage industry has incentives for students like receiving tips which can amount to a higher per-hour rate or late-night shifts that don't conflict with a class schedule.

But there can be setbacks as well, such as a lack of flexibility during the on-season (long weekends and holidays). You can also work in long, physically and mentally draining shifts that may include hostile work situations with managers and/or customers.

"We have a blackout period where you are not allowed to book time off at all [and] for ours it's like right at the beginning of exams ... I could basically get fired for not being able to work the blackout period, because that is when they are super busy." - A Working-Student



Things to consider...

Are you getting what you need from your paid position?

How does work typically affect you at the end of your shift?

Unpaid work..

What makes you want an unpaid position? A chance for work experience? A chance to make friends? A chance to explore your interests? - or do you see it as an obligation?

Deciding whether to participate in unpaid work during your degree can be a difficult choice to make.

On the one hand, many volunteer positions offer opportunities for career advancement. Volunteers can gain leadership or other senior positions more easily when compared to paid jobs, and this helps to build their workplace skills and create a stronger resume.



Volunteer opportunities can also be diverse, encouraging students to explore different domains and potentially change their future career direction.

On the other hand, these unpaid positions are not always available to everyone. For students with busy schedules and or those who are financially self-supporting, it can be hard to allocate large amounts of time to a volunteer activity when they need that time to earn money or study.

Also, these unpaid positions may be required for admission to particular graduate programs (e.g., medicine, social work) - thus, they are not, in fact, voluntary - which places additional pressure on the student and, for some, keeps these programs entirely out of reach.

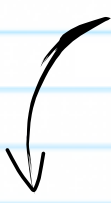
Things to consider...



Are you volunteering because you have to or because you want to?



What would volunteer work look like for you if it were something you chose to do? What about paid work?



How can you cater your volunteer experience to your interests? Where would you find such volunteer opportunities?

Considering where to work

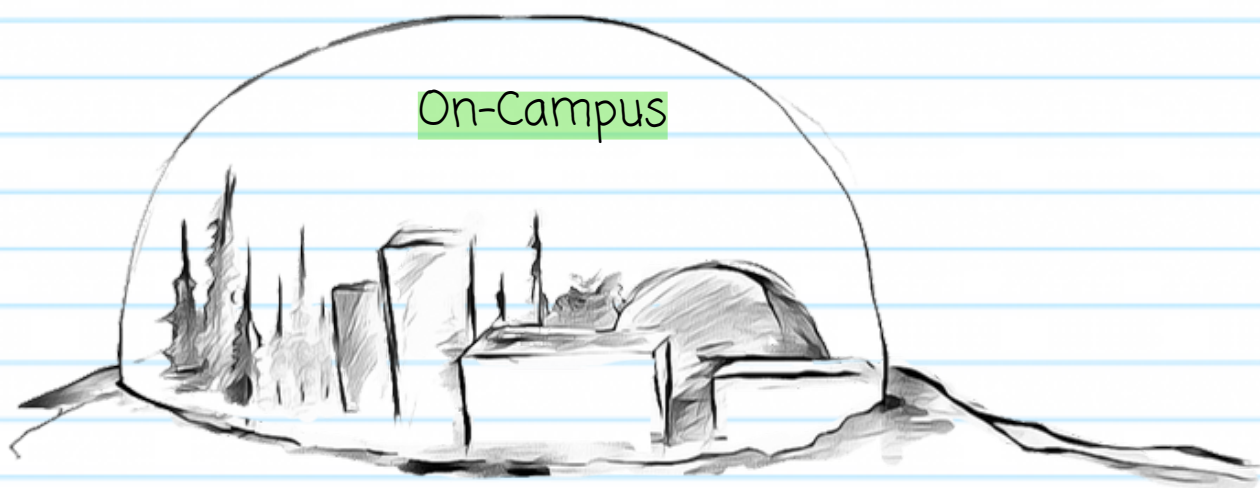
When finding a job, you are not only choosing how to earn money but also how to spend your time. Likewise, the kind of job that works for you in your first year may not be the same as that which works in your third or fourth year because your career interests or personal needs might change.

You may often want to ask yourself...

What tradeoffs am I willing to make?

Why?

In this section, we will explore the differences between working on-and-off campus, providing pros and cons that could help you determine where you might find the most suitable work.



In many ways, the convenience of studying, working, and even living on-campus is unmatched. UT can feel like it's own community of friends and families, with many food places to enjoy; it can be comfortable living in a close-knit community.

However, studying, working, and sometimes living in the same space can blur the lines between activities and become challenging to establish boundaries.

Some **pros** for on-campus life could include...

- Working on-campus can be flexible for students living in residence or who do not want to commute far from the university.
- It can be an excellent opportunity to connect with fellow university students, work with friends or network with professors - depending on the campus job.



- For example, the campus provides job workshops and employment programs such as **'Work-study'**. This program offers paid opportunities that are highly regulated and more flexible for students' academic schedules.

- Your paid hours are capped within the 'Work-study' program at UT. Limited paid work/hours may pose challenges for you if you are supporting yourself financially or paying for your own tuition for example.

Some **cons** for on-campus life could include...

- It can seem like you are living in a bubble - As you study, work and live in the same space, you may find it tiring to be surrounded by classmates and professors, constantly thinking about courses, careers, and clubs, filling your life with competition.
- It's also INCREDIBLY expensive to live on-campus, especially if you live on residence. It might mean that you have to work more to support yourself or rely more on external sources including your family while you study.



Off-Campus

Off-campus jobs can have both 'charms' and 'troubles' as well:

'Charms'

- The **diversity of workspaces and co-workers** provides a chance to build new relationships with new people. Some of these new connections can lead to new opportunities for education and Work (e.g., networks, new job).
- Getting **off-campus** work provides opportunities to explore Toronto. You can learn about new topics and skills outside the university community. These new learning opportunities can help you build your resume and skills for your future career!

'Troubles'

- Off-campus work tends to be more **precarious** and demanding due to experiences **of hostile work** situations. You can experience hostility from supervisors, co-workers and/or customers.
- **Off-campus** jobs can lack flexibility and require added time pressure (such as commuting) which can clash with your school schedule and can increase the time required for a work shift.

Overall, off-campus jobs are a **bit tricky** because they can be 'good' or 'bad'. The quality of the job that you have is largely based on your supervisor, and the supports that you can receive from them.

Consider where you work, and ask yourself...



What kind of job works best for me? Off-campus or On-campus?

'Bad' Jobs versus 'Good' Jobs

'Bad' Jobs



In some jobs, you may face unsafe working conditions, employers and customers who are abusive, or discrimination. The discriminatory encounters may include ageism, racism, and sexism that can make the workplace toxic. We call these 'bad' jobs, which are held by some post-secondary students.

Some 'bad' jobs may be 'stepping stones' to better quality work, but in many cases, "bad" jobs do not contribute to your career goals and educational aspirations.

"I also had a customer one time who swore at me and said very derogative terms at me and they said that they would ban her from the store and I had to do a whole written statement about it but she keeps showing up to the store and they do nothing about it" - A Working-Student

This is a domestic student who was working in retail for twenty hours per week and relying on government loans to pay for her tuition.

"I used to work in a place that was absolutely awful, and I hated it just because the management was terrible and I would be scheduled on my own. So on weekends it would just be me at the counter, so I have to take people's order, and prepare the food, and also serve it. And there was just one other person, and this meant I never got a break and I had to work [an] 8 hour shift"- A Working-Student

This is a domestic student who was working fourteen to twenty hours a week in food service.

Navigating 'Bad' Jobs

Some of the strategies that you can utilize to navigate 'bad' jobs as a working-student can include:

- Talking to co-workers and/or supervisors that you can trust. Find individuals that are in solidarity with you to support you!
- Asking for help from a workers' advocacy centre to address any issue that you may experience.
- Familiarizing yourself with the labour laws within your province (e.g., Ontario Employment Standards) in order to advocate for yourself more effectively.
- Filing a complaint through an online form.
 - You can obtain compensation if you don't receive breaks or are not paid what you were promised (Ontario complaint system).

If necessary, consider leaving 'bad' jobs for your health and well-being by looking for different opportunities and paid work. You never know what you can find by searching online or checking in with your networks!

"I did gift wrapping at random malls...I ended up having to chase them down and threatening to call the Labor Board because I didn't get...the checks...I called them like, "Oh, I just wanted to check I just want to make sure, things are good". And they're like "Yeah, we sent it this time. So, you should have received it. Blah, blah". And there was this back and forth. And they kept on insisting. I'm like, "Okay. I haven't gotten it. And they're just avoiding my calls"...I did contact the Labor Board". - A Working-Student



'Good' Jobs

'Good' Jobs

Off-campus jobs can be rewarding if they are 'good' jobs or if they are connected to your educational goals and career aspirations. 'Good' jobs can help you build your resume for competitive applications to graduate and/or professional schools.

You can also build your resume for a future career through relevant work-experiences and skills. 'Good' jobs for education and work tend to be accommodating to your academic schedule and flexible to your needs as a working-student.

One of the best ways of getting a 'good' job is to think about your goals and the type of work-experiences including skills that you would like to gain.

- Look for 'good' jobs by talking to peers who have had such positions, look for unionized workplaces, and apply for on-campus 'work-study' opportunities that are regulated.
- Consider volunteering or community work, which can allow you to develop skills which can lead to both paid and 'good' jobs.

Things to consider...

Are you working in a 'bad' or 'good' job?



What kind of experiences and/or skills would you like to gain at work?

"... for me, even on my 2 hour shifts, it takes 4 hours of my day, because it'll take me an hour to get there, 2 hour shift, and then an hour to get back. So it takes double the time that I work [because of commute time] ... And so the commute is actually a big aspect of working" - A Working-Student

When considering where to work, some things to think about might be...

What standards do you set as you consider where to work?



How will the features of your workplace impact your ability to juggle other priorities in your life?



So what? How Working-Students Cope with Stress?

This section includes a collection of experiences from students which we hope will provide advice and insights for dealing with the many factors of being a working-student.

"I like to keep pretty organized; I have multiple calendars and 'to do' lists. I have a calendar, like a physical one, and then one on my laptop. And I always write out every single day, what I have to do that day and what's due on that day, it could be like schoolwork or sorority stuff or just in general, things I have to do."

This is a domestic student engaging in paid work on-campus for 10 hours a week as well as 6 hours of volunteer work per week. They live at home and are supported by their parents.

This is a first-generation*, domestic university student who is self-supporting financially. They live off-campus and engage in 15 hours per week of paid work off-campus as well as 3 hours of volunteer work. They spend 15 hours a week commuting to school and work.

"[W]hen I have things that are happening at the same time, I manage them better. If I have like a free day all day, I feel like I'm going to waste it. 'Oh, I can do it later,' so I don't use it as efficiently. So, working, besides the money and all those things, it just gives you a sense of like, time management. ... So like, I have three hours to study. If I don't, then I have to work and then I will lose that time. So, in three hours I will just study. But if I didn't have work, I would be like oh I can just study at night, and I would just procrastinate and keep procrastinating and then it never happens."

This is an international student from Southeast Asia who has a scholarship covering half of his tuition. He lives on-campus, engaging in 2 jobs, both on and off campus totaling 12 hours of paid work a week. He also partakes in 12 hours of volunteer work weekly.

"I learned that when I am in the job at that moment I want to give it my 100% and I do need rest time. I need a day or 2 off in a week. I learned that through working in the summer with the course. I thought that I could you know do all 7 days as long as I sleep 8 hours it's fine, but I realized that to keep that sort of energy I need one or two days off"

*First-generation students are those whose parents did not attend university.

"I worked all week, all weekend and it just drove- my marks plummeted. If I did this seven or eight months ago, I would be completely different. I learned how to adjust myself so that I wasn't burnt out. Because by the time April and May came, I was "whew!". I was exhausted. I just reworked it so I can give myself even one day a week. Sometimes I do pick up a weekend shift, but just give myself that one day".

This is a domestic student who was paying for her tuition fees and supporting herself financially through her parent's assistance, paid work, and bank loans.

"I was continuing to work in two jobs for several weeks...and I couldn't rest on weekends. And then, my sleep schedule was messed up. I don't have any time for my friends. And then after that one ended, I continued with working for the rest of the two months, and that's what I did for the summer. Just working, working and working. And then second year started... I felt a lot better because I told my manager that I wanted less hours. So, I have more time to manage my time. And then, I had a little bit more time for my friends and school".

This is an international student who was working fourteen to twenty hours per week prior to the pandemic, but she was unemployed afterwards. She lost her job in retail due to the COVID-19 restrictions, and was actively looking for work.

"I was working two days, and then had class every single day. So, I basically had something to do every day, and didn't really have any time off, or time to myself. Which was kind of stressful, and I felt like I didn't get that much time to get work done. So, I wasn't really enjoying university. Which is important to me cause I don't just want to spend my time studying, just to get the grades. I want to actually enjoy it and learn something from it. So, in second year, I decided to become a part-time student. Only taking three courses per semester. The thing about working as well is that I kind of do it out of necessity because my mom is a single mom, and it's been hard for her. And I felt like I don't want to burden her with needing clothes or all the things".

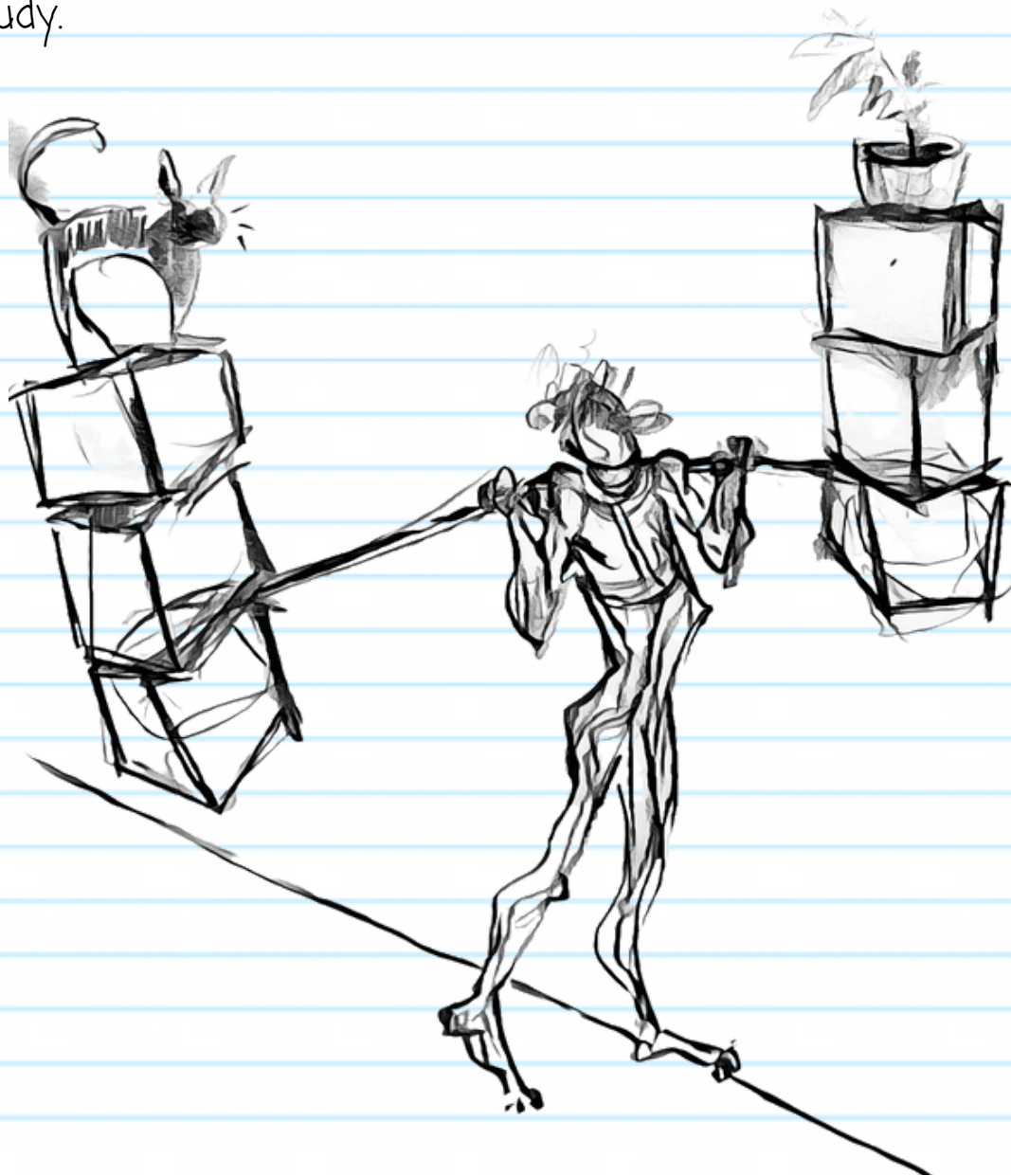
This is a domestic student who decided to study part-time in order to balance her work-study responsibilities and enjoy her university experience to the fullest.

For the Faculty

To the university faculty and student services, we understand and appreciate your dedication to enhancing the quality of our education and wellbeing.

However, many working-students want more flexibility and recognition of their demanding schedules. Below is a reflection from Alison Taylor, a professor at UBC and principal investigator of the Hard Working-Student research project. We also have a reflection from Kiran Mirchandani, Co-investigator of the HWVS project from UT.

Read from the perspective of university staff and see what Alison and Kiran have to say about the character of balancing work and study.



From Alison

"Leading the Hard Working-Student research project has given me a greater understanding of working-students in their diversity, as well as changes in undergraduate life over time.

Many years ago, as a first-generation university student, I was able to work full time in summer to pay my tuition and living expenses for the coming year. Today's students, particularly those who are self-funding, face greater pressure because of much higher costs, especially in cities like Vancouver.

I learned from our interviews that many students simply aren't able to give the expected time and energy to their studies because of financial pressures. These financial pressures also tend to make career and academic exploration more costly, and therefore less likely. This may be especially true for international students who pay up to five times more tuition.

Overall, the varied impacts of students' term-time work tend to be invisible. The majority of students work off-campus in service sector jobs where employment tends to be less regulated, and at times, exploitative. Part-time campus employment related to studies is less common.

It's therefore not surprising that while many students feel that their work enriches and complements their studies, others find that it adds yet another layer of stress. It can also be very challenging for students to live in the present given the demands of the 'PEP student' discourse".

From Kiran

About a decade ago, I started teaching an undergraduate course on Gender and Work, and each year I was surprised to find that more and more students in my class were working a substantial number of hours while also taking a full course load. So I partnered with Alison and a team of students to explore the experiences of working-students at the University of Toronto.

Everywhere we are surrounded by messages that young people should get work experience to supplement their degrees. Working allows students to learn to budget, manage their time, communicate, interact with others, and be responsible. But not all jobs lead to these kinds of learning. Amongst the students we talked to, some had really good jobs, with flexible schedules that allowed them to not only gain experience related to their career aspirations, but also to adjust their work times when they had assignments or exams.

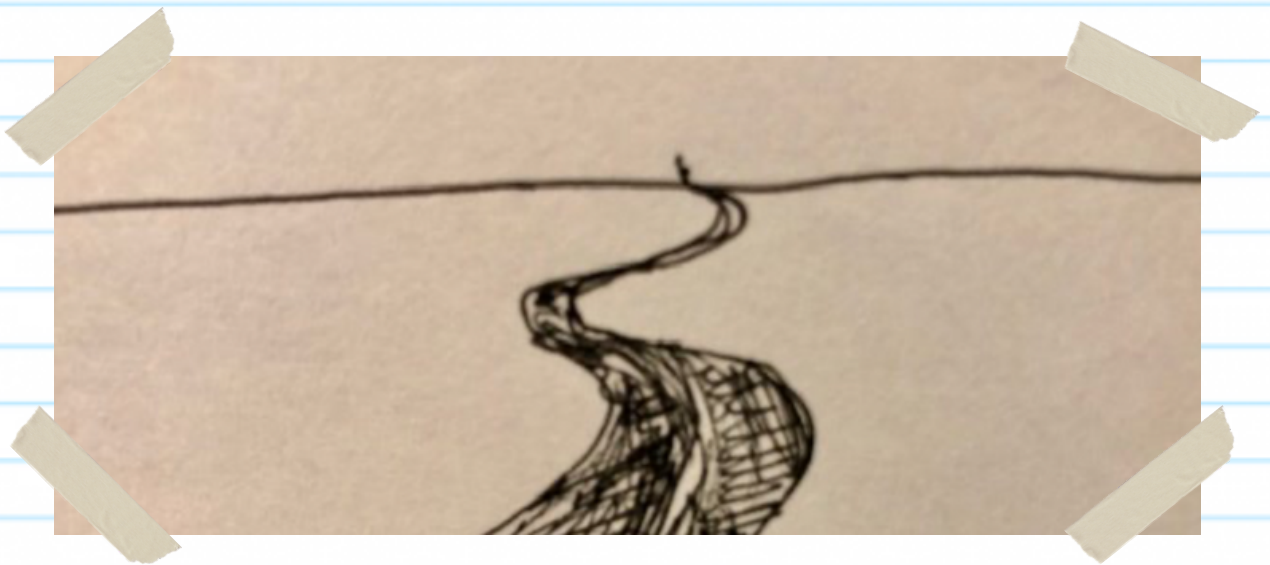
Many students aspired to work in good jobs where they could gain useful career-related experience, but found that these opportunities were scarcer than they hoped. Very often, students worked in the food and retail sector, where they faced harassment from customers and managers because of their gender, age or race. They had little control over their schedules. Some felt unsafe at work, were not given breaks, or were not even paid for all the hours they worked. They learned how to cope, but it also led to stress, depression and poor health.

While students might do their best to find good jobs, there is a limit to how much they can do individually because many of the sectors which students have access to also have a lot of precarious jobs. If students feel that their workplace is unsafe or hostile they might try to find another job. But this is a bandage solution because other people will end up in these jobs.

There are things we can do. We can encourage students to think of their time as a student and worker as an opportunity to advocate for the kind of world we want to work in. As university students, administrators and faculty at elite universities, we have to find collective strength to make sure no-one is asked to do work which puts their physical and mental health in danger. We can turn to collective strategies through community and student groups, launch complaints and volunteer for organizations which aim to develop better labour policies.

Elite universities educate leaders of tomorrow, and as students journey towards this role, we can encourage them to learn the skills they need to demand better workplaces and better universities for all.

Kiran ☺



Recommendations

Given the HWS project findings, we recommend the following:

For administrators and policymakers..

- Explore ways to reduce the financial burden on students, especially for those that are on financial assistance.
 - Ensure that working-class students receive ample grants to pay for fees, housing, food and transportation for example.
- Take an equity approach to supporting students by providing specific resources to BIPOC students, especially those of working-class backgrounds.
 - Develop a quota system for scholarships, internships and work-study opportunities.
- Create equity seeking working groups that can address racism including anti-black racism on campus.
- Provide supportive resources including accommodations such as additional office hours, tutoring, mental health supports, and employment and labour experts who can support students when they face difficult situations at work.
- Recognize and advocate for working-students to help them manage the dual pressures of working and studying.
 - For example, you can do this by creating a 'Worker's Advocacy' centre on campus and by connecting with organizations within the community.



For instructors and program coordinators..

- Recognize the complexity and necessity of work for many students.
 - In class introductions, ask about their paid and unpaid work commitments too.
 - Include 'work demands' as a reason for granting assignment and exam accommodations.
- Provide students with some flexibility in terms of course schedules and the type of work that's expected from them.
 - For example, you can provide courses at different times every semester and offer students some choice in terms of how they would like to be graded (e.g., writing an essay or doing group work).
 - You can also be more flexible with assignment deadlines and assessment dates.



For students ourselves...

- As a group, educate university staff and faculty about the 'working-student' life.
 - This study aims to do that too!
- Talk to instructors as well as other students about your situation and any challenges that you are encountering.
- Learn about the supports and resources available to you within and beyond the university.
- Familiarize yourself with labour laws and regulations within your province.
 - Explore the type of resources that are available to you by the government, and at work, university, non-for-profit organizations, community etc.

- Read over this guide and take time to reflect on the questions posed as well as others that are specific to your own situation.
 - Remember, everyone's 'juggling act' is different ... and that's ok.

Things we would like you to consider as policy makers, administrators, instructors etc...

Are equity seeking groups (e.g., BIPOC, working-class students) supported?



How can we understand the needs of equity seeking groups? Survey? Focus groups? Research? Mobilization of existing findings?



How can we support equity seeking groups in an institutional manner as opposed to individually?



Concluding Remarks from the Authors

As you make your way to the end of our guide, we want to thank you for reading, and we hope that we have encouraged you to reflect on your experiences.

With this guide, we hope to make tangible some of the experiences that working-students may face throughout their degree. We also hope to showcase the diversity of students' experiences. All of us are working students and we know that the stress of working, and studying can sometimes seem invisible. However, we realized we weren't the only ones who were struggling to keep up as we read the reflections of student participants and learned more about the study findings.

The preconception about university is that it is a constant struggle - academically, financially, sometimes socially - and this is true, albeit not the whole story. Students can have this idea that if you're not struggling and pushing yourself to the limit in academic or other work, then you aren't trying hard enough in your degree.

We realize that not everyone can live up to and benefit from 'THE university experience'. Everyone's story will look different, and YOUR university experience will depend on your goals and priorities.

With this in mind, one of our student participants shared a good point:

"do things if you don't feel qualified, like, what does that really mean? Do you have the motivation and the excitement and the inspiration to put energy into those things? If so, then do it like take those opportunities"

Your university experience will also depend on the type of supports that are available to you, both within and outside campus. For example, your relationship with your professors and the type of support that you have from them will shape your experiences. The type of resources that are available to you on campus for mental health will also play a role in how your university experiences will pan out.

So, we encourage you to speak up when you need to in order to receive support, whether it's by speaking to professors or other staff at the university. Consider creating a support system for you, especially if you experience socio-economic challenges related to your social location as a BIPOC or working-class student.

Develop a self-care plan with resources/supports that reflect your needs as a working-student. See what the university has to offer you, and develop your plan around it. We know first hand that creating a supportive network of resources and trusted people will be vital for your academic success and well-being.

We know it's not easy to develop a supportive system or network, especially for working-class and BIPOC students. Having said this, we know its so importnat.

- Wesal Abu Qaddum

"I found it helpful to develop a support system within and outside the university to help me navigate any challenges that I may encounter as a doctoral student. The competitive culture within the university can make it harder to engage in self-care and attain a work-life balance. However, it's so important to take care of yourself".

Furthermore, the idea of "being qualified" contributes to the struggles that many of us face - we've all heard of 'imposter syndrome' - but it's important to remember that we are playing a part in creating our own experiences and that our time in university cannot be compared to the experiences of others, nor can it perfectly measure up to the PEPS (i.e., Productive, Employable, Planful, Student) standard.

Even for some of us, we found our position in this project through Work-Learn (i.e., work-study) at UBC, but it wasn't easy to apply:

"As a first-year student, I felt pressured by my peers and PEPS culture to build career-relevant experience early on in my degree. Before landing this position, I applied to tens of employers before hearing the response I wanted. My advice to you is that even if you feel inadequate about the number of work experiences you have or your level of competency --- apply anyways. The job posting for this Research Assistantship wanted third or fourth years, but I still took the risk and landed the position as a first-year!"

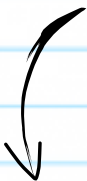
- Jacob Sablan

- Kalli McIver

"When I first read about the HVVS project in the job description for this position, I immediately felt a sense of passion and excitement for the idea that I might be able to apply my degree and my ideas to something that I want to be doing. This was quickly followed by a sense of fear because my resume lacked both professional work experience and volunteer experience specific to the research field. I applied anyways despite feeling underqualified and it has been exactly the experience I had hoped it would."



We don't propose an answer to this dilemma, but we hope to at least give you the same sense of awareness and community that we felt while working on this project. We also hope that you take the time to self-reflect to understand your needs as a working student, and seek support where needed.

Consider the following questions as points of departure for self-reflection...



How do you envision 'THE' university experience for you? And how can you achieve the 'best' experience for you?

What kind of challenges do you experience as a working-student that can stand in the way of having the 'best' university experience? Are some of these challenges re-occurring?



What kind of resources or supports are available to you within and outside the university?

Do you have trusted people such as family members, friends, co-workers or community members for example that you can reach out to for support?

We hope that these questions were useful in helping you reflect on your current university experience, and the ways in which you can enhance it. Regardless of your answers, we hope that you will enjoy the journey and we wish you all the best with your future endeavors!

-Kalli, Jacob and Wesal

Resources

More About Our Study

If you are interested in the academic aspect of our guide and the stories of working students, check out our blog site! Click on the links to learn more about the papers our team wrote, links to conference presentations, podcast episodes, our project origins and the folks behind the research.

- Reports Written About the Study
 - [Hard Working Students Report of 2018 and 2019 Survey Findings](#)
 - [Student Volunteer Work and Learning: Undergraduates' Experiences and Self-Reported Outcomes](#)

Resources for Working-Students at UT

We have resources below that can help you navigate the university as a working-student. The resources range from mental health, to academic supports and employment opportunities that are part of the 'work-study' program.

- Mental Health
 - [Mental Health Clinical Services](#)
 - [UT My Student Support Program](#)
 - [Distress Centres of Greater Toronto](#)
 - [Supports and Services at UT and the Community](#)
 - [Navi: Mental Health Wayfinder](#)
 - [Health & Wellness Workshops](#)
 - [Health & Wellness Peer Support](#)
 - [Academic Success](#)
 - [Accessibility Services](#)
- Career Supports & Resources
 - [Work-study Program](#)
 - [Job Fraud Information and Supports](#)
 - [Employment Fairs and Events](#)

- Experiential Learning Catalogue
- Mentorship
- Career Exploration & Education
- Academic Advising & Career Centre
- Arts & Science Internship Program (ASIP)
- Employment Standards Act in Ontario

- Finances
 - Fees and Costs
 - Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP)
 - Student Awards and Scholarships
 - University of Toronto Financial Aid (UTAPS)
 - Scholarships and Awards for International Students
 - Financial Aid Advising

- Diversity and Inclusion
 - Anti-racism and Cultural Diversity Office
 - Sexual & Gender Diversity Office
 - International and Indigenous Course Module Program
 - First Nations House: Indigenous Student Services
 - Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre
 - Accessibility Services
 - Multi-faith Centre
 - Family Care Office

- Housing
 - Housing on-Campus
 - Housing Advice and Support off-Campus
 - Housing Emergency Support
 - Housing Workshops, Education & More

Resources Outside the UT Campuses

If you want to find work (paid or unpaid) that is unaffiliated with the university, using sites such as LinkedIn or Indeed are excellent platforms to start. You can strengthen your resume and cover letter writing or find a position within your desired location or field; these platforms make it convenient through the help of their tailored job search engines.

- Indeed
 - Career Advice from Indeed
 - Writing a Cover Letter
 - "What are your weaknesses" - 8 things you can say.
 - Accepting a Job Offer Professionally.
 - How To Use The STAR Interview Response Technique
 - 18 Important Considerations Before Accepting A Job Offer

- LinkedIn
 - Student Career Resources
 - How To Build A Great Student Profile
 - How To Write A Resume That Gets The Recruiter's Attention
 - Practice for Common Job Interview Questions
 - Starting Your First Job Search On LinkedIn

- Labour Specific
 - Ministry of Labour Complaints Form
 - Workers' Action Centre



HWS Blogsite



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