

# Optimize your Application

For Residence & Student Life Roles across the University of Toronto  
January 8, 2025

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*Pronounced **Kay-thee-sen***

Career Educator

# A plan for our time together



- Learn how to identify skills listed in the residence and student life job descriptions, and match your transferable skills to what's required for the role
- Explore best practices for writing resumes, and how to create impactful accomplishment statements
- Discuss approaches to writing strong and persuasive answers to application questions

# Part One:

## Assessing the Posting



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# Using the Job/Position Posting

Review the job posting to identify **key transferable skills**

*To do this, look for:*

- Frequency of reference & order
- 'read between the lines'
- industry-specific language and terminology
- Research the college or residence, and any affiliated programming as well as potential supervisors



# Let's Assess Together (Example)

## Learning eXperience Assistant (LXA)

### *Programming and Community Outreach:*

- Collaborate with equity-seeking groups for inclusive learning experiences.
- Design and facilitate bi-weekly programs using design thinking frameworks.
- Attend mandatory training and professional development sessions.
- Collaborate positively with student leaders and staff for community support.
- Participate in weekly LXA meetings for ongoing coordination.
- Maintain a visible, approachable presence as a positive role model in the New College community.

### *Digital Content Creation:*

- Create comprehensive content creation using digital design tools.
- Utilize design thinking and social media for digital program development.
- Ensure compliance with New College design guides and AODA accessibility standards

This is only part of the job description, be sure to review in full when applying!

# Let's Assess Together (Example)

## Learning eXperience Assistant (LXA)

### *Programming and Community Outreach:*

- **Collaborate** with equity-seeking groups for **inclusive learning experiences**.
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- Ensure compliance with New College design guides and AODA accessibility standards.

**Design thinking** was mentioned **3 times** in the (full) job description, and **community outreach** was mentioned **2 times**!

# Connecting the dots:

How do we relate our experiences to the skills required for the role?

*If the role is asking for...*

## **Team-work/Collaboration**

- When have you worked in a team? What was your role? Think jobs, group projects, clubs, etc.

*If the role is asking for...*

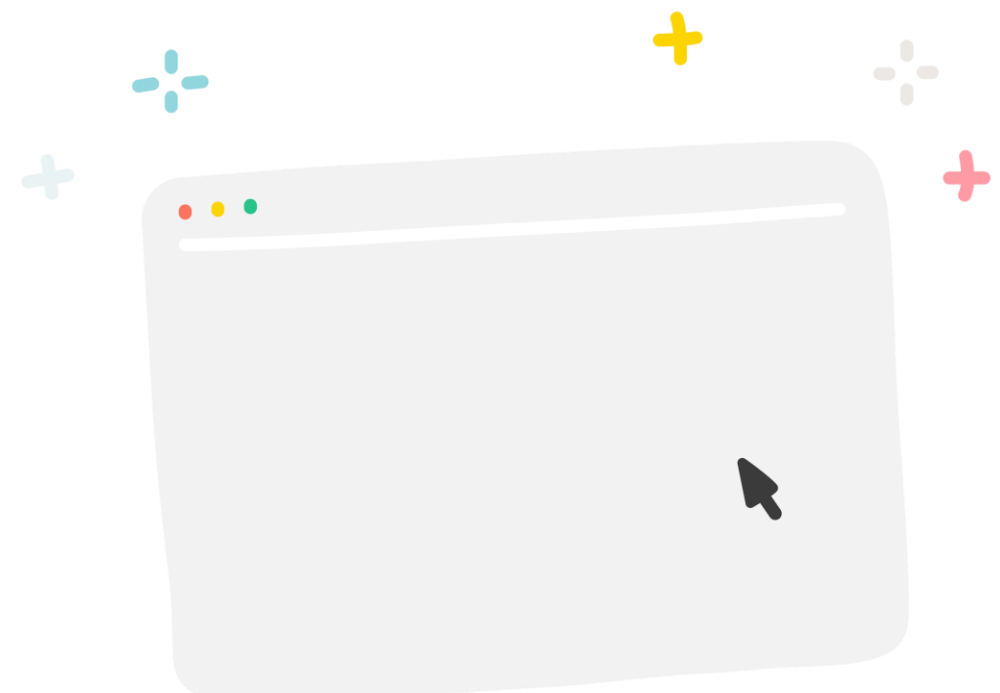
## **Digital Content Creation**

- What digital design tools are you familiar with? What tools do you hope to develop proficiency in? How have you or would you use(d) elements of design thinking in content creation?

*If the role is asking for...*

## **Leadership and mentorship**

- What's a time you've taken a leadership or mentoring role? Do you have a great story about helping a peer?



# Part Two:

## Creating the Application



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# What is the purpose of application documents?

- Introduce your career narrative(s)
- Highlight most relevant skills and experience, as they relate to the position that you're applying for
- Demonstrate your research and writing skills (and many others!)
- Explain why you are interested in the position



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# What makes a great application?

- Tailored to the job description (e.g. keywords)
- Well organized (e.g. consistent formatting, appropriate length)
- Focused on *skills* and *accomplishments*

## Tip!

The [Résumé and a Cover Letter Toolkit](#) has samples.

# Resume Overview

## Length

- 1 or 2 FULL pages

## Focus

- Skills and Accomplishments

## Formatting

- Bullet points, not paragraphs!
- Neutral colors (black preferred), simple fonts (Times New Roman or Calibri are good!)

## Header

- Include name, phone number, e-mail, and LinkedIn (if applicable) - address is not required

## Headshot/photograph

- Do not include

## References

- Do not include

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### HIGHLIGHTS OF SKILLS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- ♣ 3 years Event Management experience
- ♣ 2 years Customer Service experience in retail and educational sectors
- ♣ Fully versed in multiple social media platforms, incl. Facebook, Instagram, Mailchimp Skype for Business, Google packages, Canva
- ♣ Extensive experience supporting and working with diverse and cross-functional teams
- ♣ Spearheaded a team of 60 peer mentors for an E-Mentorship program, for over 100 students
- ♣ Exceeded sign-up rates by 50% at UC's Thrive Orientation, resulting in over 200 applicants
- ♣ B.A. Sociology, minor in Human Geography

### WORK EXPERIENCE

#### Program & Residence Don (University College), University of Toronto Aug. – May 2019

- Planned and executed over 32 social, educational and developmental programs for 300 students over an 8 month period, meeting learning outcomes and organizational goals
- Successfully launched new in-residence initiatives to tackle student concerns surrounding mental health for example, Exam-Care Week and Identify, Assist & Refer sessions
- Created and distributed creative and informative event posters, flyers, website pages and weekly social media posts, strengthening community engagement and attendance at events
- Increased the number of events from previous year by designing and implementing 8 new programs, including for example a multi-faith cultural lunch, while coming in on-budget
- Researched and liaised with food and equipment vendors for events from 20 – 300 people
- Successfully responded to student on-calls within college residence, handling matters requiring conflict resolution and problem solving in a professional and sensitive manner

#### Program & Administration Assistant, University of Toronto May – Sept. 2018

- Designed, implemented and managed an E-Mentorship program for 1,000 incoming 1<sup>st</sup> year students, easing their transition into university
- Managed a team of 60 peer tutors remotely and 2 work-study students, keeping strict weekly deadlines which were never missed
- Re-designed and re-marketed UC's Thrive Orientation, resulting in 50% more engagement across social media
- Planned and ran two Student Orientations simultaneously, the success of both of which were commended by the UC Dean of Students

#### Student Life Work Study Assistant (UC), University of Toronto Sept. 2017 – May 2018

- Organized a 1 day U of T Leadership Conference, attracting 120 student delegates which received positive feedback from attendees and work supervisors

# Common Resume Sections

- **Summary (OR Highlights) of Qualifications (OR Skills)**
- **Education**
- **Awards & Scholarships and/or Achievements**
- **Experience**
  - *Relevant* Experience
  - Work Experience
  - Research Experience
  - Academic Experience/Highlights
  - Academic Projects

- Volunteer Experience
- Extra Curricular/Co-Curricular/Leadership Experience/Community Involvement
- Additional Experience

## **Maybe also have:**

- Conferences & Training (or similar)
- Certificates
- Memberships/Affiliations

# What is the 'Highlights of Qualifications'?

- First section at top of resume
- 3 to 5 bullet points
- Summarizes your experience based on the key skills employer is looking for
- Replaces 'Objectives' header
- Tailor your Highlights of Qualifications section to each job you apply to
- All additional information in your resume should build on your Highlights of Qualifications section

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**HIGHLIGHTS OF SKILLS & ACHIEVEMENTS**

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# Example Highlights of Qualifications

- One year experience as an orientation leader for Innis College, building community with incoming students to support their university transition
- Collaborative, enthusiastic and passionate student with leadership and mentorship experience developed through clubs and residence life
- Excellent communication skills and experience using various social media platforms, including Instagram and TikTok
- Resident of Wetmore Hall with extensive knowledge of New College resources and programming, and the Office of Residence and Student Life

# Accomplishment Statements

- Accomplishment Statements are formulaic bullet points that showcase your skills and impact.



# Where do I put accomplishment statements?



Each of these  
bullet points should be  
an accomplishment  
statement!

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# Sample Accomplishment Statements:

## Focus on Skills, Purpose & Outcome

### ***Orientation Leader, Trinity College***

September 2023

- Created a welcoming community for 12 first year students, in collaboration with team co-leader, easing their transition to university life
- Developed engaging and informative events to introduce incoming students to resources at the university and support their success

### ***Resident, Wilson House, Wetmore Hall, New College***

September 2022 – April 2023

- Collaborated with Dons and fellow residents to develop an inclusive and welcoming environment, by contributing to programming and community-building initiatives
- Identified programming and resources across New College and the university community, and shared information amongst the residence to increase access to resources

# Answering Application Questions

## Q: Why do you want to be a [role type] and how would you benefit from it?

**Consider:** What draws you to the role? Based on the job description and your understanding of the role, what is a skill/competency you hope to develop? How do the duties of the role fit into your future goals? Don't forget to answer **both** parts of this question!

## Q: What would you bring to your role as a residence don/LXA/CA/OC?

*For example, the Residence Don position, you may consider:*

- Understanding of and/or experience in residence
- Leadership experience and community engagement experience
- Commitment to creativity, inclusion, and innovation
- Mentorship and role modelling
- Critical thinking/problem solving

# Answering Application Questions

**Q: Identify a specific challenge incoming first-year students might face in residence. Describe a unique event or program you would create to address this challenge.**

*Consider: It's OK to reflect on our own lived experiences. What specific challenges did you, or other students you know of, faced as incoming first-year students? What would have felt nice to have during that time (and why)?*

*Don't forget logistics and resources:*

- *Are you collaborating with others?*
- *Do you have a budget?*
- *What are the steps to take you from planning to running the event itself?*
- *How did you know you addressed the problem effectively?*

# What to (potentially) have ready before you submit

- Résumé
- Cover Letter
- Application/reflection question(s)
  - Role-specific questions (programming, academics, etc.)
- References (2)
- Academic transcript (or cGPA screenshot)\*

## Notes:

- Confirm on the college/residence application page for full details (including deadlines)  
<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/become-a-don-or-residence-assistant/>
- Submissions are completed through Microsoft Forms (assume you can't edit after submission!)

# Career Exploration & Education

## Career Education – concepts, information and support

- 1-1 Career Advising appointments (CLNx)
- Suite of over 20 different workshops (CLNx)
- [Career Resource Library](#)

## Career Exploration – learning experiences

- [Job Shadowing Program](#)
- [In The Field](#)
- [Work-Study Program](#)
  - Work Stream
  - Research Stream

## Career Experience – connection to employers

- 4 Job Boards (CLNx)
- Employers Info sessions
  - [Industry Spotlights](#)
- So much more!

For more information, please visit:

- [Career & Co-Curricular Learning Network \(CLNx\) - for U of T students & alumni](#)
- [Career Exploration & Education Website](#)

\*\*\* [Not sure where to begin? Click here! \(Career Start\)](#) \*\*\*

# Thank you!

*Any questions?*

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**@UOFTSTUDENTLIFE**

# Student Life Online

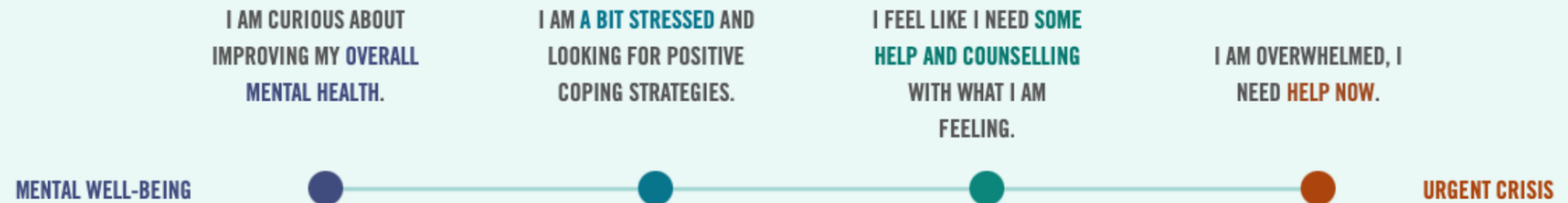
- Find answers to [Frequently Asked Questions](#) regarding **Student Life programs and services** during COVID-19
- Find [answers to frequently asked questions](#) about coping with **stress, residence, help for international students and safety abroad** from the Office of the Vice Provost, Students.

# Be Well

- U of T My SSP: Call **1-844-451-9700** or **001-416-380-6578** (outside North America) or download the app at the [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play](#). Immediate counselling support is available in 35 languages and ongoing support in 146 languages.
- [Good2Talk Student Helpline](#): Call **1-866-925-5454**. Professional counseling, information and referrals student helpline for mental health, substance use disorder, and well-being.
- [Anishnawbe Health Toronto Mental Health Crisis Line](#): Call **416-360-0486**



## SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO?



No matter where you are on the mental wellness continuum, from being proactive about your well-being, to feeling stressed and needing urgent help, U of T is here to support you.

**We want to empower you to find the resources you need to feel and do your best. We have two new tools to help you.**

# Navi & Mental Health Resource Hub



An anonymous chat tool that can respond to specific questions and direct you to helpful resources. Check out Navi if you want help on specific topics, like test anxiety or roommate issues, or if you're simply feeling stressed but don't know where to start.

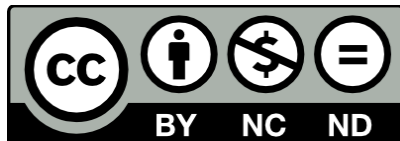
Look for the Navi icon on many U of T websites or visit **uoft.me/navi**.

## MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE HUB

A website where you can browse programs and services on all campuses, build a personal tool kit of apps and resources or explore the stepped care model of service.

**mentalhealth.utoronto.ca**

If you are in crisis, visit  
**uoft.me/feelingdistressed**  
or call/visit My SSP at  
**1-844-451-9700** or **uoft.me/myssp**



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