

# Article Prompt for News Editor Applicants — 2025

## Prompt details:

In 2022, *The Ubyyssey* published [a piece](#) detailing serious understaffing problems at UBC's Aquatic Centre. The piece also details several other problems that stemmed from those understaffing problems, from staff being overworked to complaints of low pay and managerial inaction on employee concerns.

Since it's now 2025, write an article as a sort of "where is the Aquatic Centre on these issues now" piece. Make sure to incorporate quotes (*note: these quotes are made up for the purposes of this prompt*) from Aquatic Centre management and lifeguards 'Jordan' and 'Sam.' Your article should be around 500 words and mirror the format of previous pieces in *The Ubyyssey's* news section.

## Interview #1:

**NOTE: This is a fictitious interview constructed for the purpose of assessing quote integration.**

### Reporter:

Thanks for sitting down with me today. There've been a few complaints raised recently about working conditions at the UBC Aquatic Centre, and I wanted to get your perspectives as lifeguards who work here. Could you start by introducing yourselves, giving your name, pronouns and what year of study you're in at UBC?

### Lifeguard 1 (Jordan Peele):

Sure. I'm Jordan, I go by he/him and I've been a lifeguard here at UBC for about two and a half years now. Oh and I'm also in my fourth year at UBC studying engineering.

### Lifeguard 2 (Sam Gamgee):

Hey, I'm Sam Gamgee, I also go by he/him and I'm a third year forestry student. I've been working for the Aquatic Centre for just over a year now.

### Reporter:

Perfect, thanks. So to start broadly—how would you describe the current working conditions at the Aquatic Centre?

### Peele:

Honestly, I'd say it's a mixed bag. Things have improved in some important ways since 2022 for sure, like, one of the big complaints back then was the swimsuit policy—it was super rigid and didn't account for people's gender identity personal comfort or even like practical functionality.

That's changed now thanks to the complaints that were raised and now there's a lot more flexibility and inclusivity, which has really helped with morale and team culture.

**Gamgee:**

Yeah, for sure. People feel more comfortable just being themselves on deck now, and that actually makes a difference in how the team works together. You're not constantly second-guessing if your suit is "appropriate enough" or if you'll be called out for something minor and like, now we actually have rash guards? Other staff that have worked here longer have said we never used to have those and that was a huge contributor to making the swimsuits we did have uncomfortable.

**Reporter:**

That's great thanks for sharing. Off of the swimsuit concerns, do either of you have any complaints about staffing or compensation?

**Peele:**

Lowkey that's where it's still kinda tough if I'm being honest. Staffing is better than it was in 2022—like, we're not constantly running on skeleton crews anymore—but it's not consistent. Some days we're fine, others we're scrambling to cover shifts. It feels like we're always one call-out away from being in the red zone again and that still stresses me out. Especially since I'm more senior and have been working here longer, when those shifts do crop up I feel like management expects me to put aside my other responsibilities and show up for the pool even if I wasn't originally scheduled.

**Gamgee:**

Yeah, and because of that, people get burned out quickly. You're picking up extra shifts, covering on short notice, sometimes working through breaks or staying late if someone calls in sick. It adds up.

**Reporter:**

Is that kind of pressure something you both experience regularly?

**Peele:**

Definitely. It's not every shift, but it's frequent enough to feel like the norm. I think the issue is, we're treated like we're just part-time or seasonal support, but the expectations on us are pretty full-on. Lifeguarding isn't just sitting on a chair watching people swim—it's constant vigilance, responding to medical situations, managing patrons, doing maintenance checks... It's a lot.

**Gamgee:**

Exactly. And when you're doing all that, but you're paid less than lifeguards at other public pools in the region? That stings. Some of our staff have left for other city pools or rec centres because the pay is better and the workload's more balanced, like, I have a friend who works at a rec centre downtown and she makes \$3 more than I do every hour. That doesn't sound like a lot, like it's just \$3, but every hour it seriously racks up.

**Reporter:**

Do you feel like your concerns are being heard by management?

**Peele:**

To some extent, yeah. Like, there's an open-door vibe—supervisors will hear you out, and they'll acknowledge what you're saying. But hearing and acting are two different things. I think there's some disconnect between what staff are saying and what's actually changing at the operational level.

**Gamgee:**

And there's always a bit of that "we're working on it" response. Which is fine, until you realize it's the same answer people got in 2022. So from our side, it can feel like progress is happening, but at a snail's pace.

**Reporter:**

If you had to point to one or two things that would make the biggest difference right now, what would they be?

**Peele:**

Fair pay is the big one. Lifeguards across the board have been advocating for better wages. We're trained professionals with serious responsibilities—first aid, emergency response, even customer service—and we should be paid accordingly. Especially at a major institution like UBC.

**Gamgee:**

And more stable scheduling. If they could build a schedule that supports people's availability without relying on last-minute calls or pressure to cover, that would take a lot of stress off everyone. It would also help with retention cause people are more likely to stick around when their time is respected.

**Reporter:**

Do you both plan on staying long-term, or are you looking elsewhere?

**Peele:**

I'm kind of on the fence. I love the team, and I care about this place, but if another opportunity came up with better pay and support, I'd for sure jump ship. Can you not include that in the final piece though haha.

**Gamgee:**

Haha same. I like working here and I love the energy of the pool, but it's hard to ignore when friends at other facilities are making more and doing less. We shouldn't have to choose between doing what we love and making a livable wage.

**Reporter:**

That makes sense. It sounds like there have been some positive steps forward, but a lot of the deeper concerns from 2022 are still lingering.

**Peele:**

Yeah, that's fair to say. We've come a long way—but we're not where we should be yet.

**Gamgee:**

Exactly. We're not trying to bash the Centre—we just want to see it grow in the right direction. A place like UBC should be setting the standard, not playing catch-up.

**Reporter:**

Thanks so much for speaking so openly. I really appreciate your time, and I hope this conversation helps shed light on what lifeguards are still facing.

**Peele:**

Thanks for taking the time to ask.

**Gamgee:**

Yeah, thanks. Hopefully this leads to more conversations and more action and both of us don't get fired.

## **Interview #2:**

**NOTE: This is a fictitious interview constructed for the purpose of assessing quote integration.**

**Reporter:**

Thank you for sitting down with me today. I'm here to talk about some of the changes that have taken place at the UBC Aquatic Centre since the complaints were raised by workers in 2022 regarding unfair pay, understaffing, and other work conditions. I'm hoping you can shed some light on what management has done to address these issues.

**Head of Management:**

Of course. I appreciate you reaching out. We've been working diligently to improve the overall work environment here at the Aquatic Centre. Since 2022, we've implemented several key changes to address employee concerns—most notably around staffing levels, wages, and policies that directly impact our staff. I'm proud to say that things have improved quite a bit.

**Reporter:**

You mentioned staffing improvements. Can you give me a specific example of how understaffing has been addressed? I know workers had raised concerns about working too many hours and not having enough support, particularly during peak times.

**Head of Management:**

Absolutely. We've increased our staff roster significantly. We've been more proactive with recruitment, ensuring that we're fully staffed, especially during high-demand periods. We've also revamped our scheduling system to allow for more flexibility and to ensure that our staff aren't overworked. We're committed to creating a healthier work-life balance for everyone here.

**Reporter:**

Nice that sounds great. But I do want to circle back to wages since some of the guards I spoke to maintained that in their complaints. Could you tell me how wages have changed since 2022? Have they been raised to reflect the concerns about unfair compensation?

**Head of Management:**

We've definitely made adjustments. We've carefully evaluated compensation and made substantial improvements to our pay structure to ensure that our employees feel valued for their hard work. As you can imagine, these adjustments are part of an ongoing process. We want to remain competitive with industry standards and make sure our employees are satisfied.

**Reporter:**

I appreciate that, but can you give me an idea of what those wage increases actually look like? I know there's been some speculation about whether your wages are comparable to other aquatic facilities in the area. Are they in line with what's considered standard for lifeguards at similar centers?

**Head of Management:**

I can't speak to the specifics of wage comparisons with other facilities at this time. As you can imagine, salaries can vary based on a range of factors—experience, certifications, and even shift availability, among other things. What I will say is that we've worked hard to ensure our pay is fair, and we continue to monitor the situation closely to make further adjustments if necessary.

**Reporter:**

I understand that you can't give specifics, but can you at least clarify whether wages have gone up enough to address the concerns raised by employees? Some workers felt that the pay didn't reflect the level of responsibility, especially in terms of their safety and emergency response duties.

**Head of Management:**

I'm confident that the adjustments we've made have addressed those concerns. We take the safety and well-being of our staff very seriously. The work our lifeguards do is critical, and their role is highly valued here. Our pay structure now reflects that. Beyond pay, we've also ensured additional training and support is available to all staff, which we believe further elevates the level of responsibility they're given.

**Reporter:**

So, in terms of addressing the swimsuit policy, workers also raised concerns about what they perceived as an overly strict and outdated dress code. How has that been revised?

**Head of Management:**

Yes, the swimsuit policy was something that required a closer look. After gathering feedback, we made changes to ensure that the dress code is both professional and comfortable for all our staff. It's important for our lifeguards to feel confident and comfortable in their roles. We've

struck a better balance between maintaining safety standards and allowing staff to have more flexibility in their uniform choices.

**Reporter:**

That's good to hear. Going back to staffing—has the center had any trouble with retention, especially given the issues workers raised in 2022?

**Head of Management:**

Retention has been stable, and we've seen a lot of positive feedback from our staff. We've worked on improving communication between management and staff, ensuring they feel heard. Additionally, we've launched new initiatives to recognize and reward hard work—whether that's through professional development opportunities, special incentives, or team-building events. We've seen fewer turnover issues since implementing these changes, so we're hopeful we're on the right path.

**Reporter:**

You've mentioned rewards and incentives—can you elaborate on what those are? What sort of initiatives are we talking about?

**Head of Management:**

I'd say our primary focus has been on increasing opportunities for staff to grow within the organization. We've partnered with external organizations to provide more advanced training for our lifeguards and supervisors. Additionally, we've introduced a quarterly recognition program, where outstanding staff are rewarded with bonuses or additional time off. These incentives have been well-received, and we think it helps create a more positive work culture.

**Reporter:**

Alright, I just have one more question. There's still some skepticism among the staff that the changes being made are enough to really address the underlying problems. Some feel that management is trying to deflect from the core issues by focusing on smaller, surface-level changes. What would you say to those who still have doubts?

**Head of Management:**

I understand that skepticism. Change, especially at this scale, doesn't happen overnight. But I assure you that we're fully committed to improving the workplace for our employees. These changes have been made after careful consideration of the issues raised. We're actively listening to our staff and adjusting our approach as needed. We take their concerns seriously, and we're here to make sure that everyone who works at the Aquatic Centre feels valued, supported, and respected.

**Reporter:**

I appreciate your time today. Thanks for answering my questions.

**Head of Management:**

Thanks for having me. We're committed to continuing the work we've started and ensuring the best for both our staff and the people who use our facilities. Take care.