



## Grad School 101 Helpful Tips Sheet

### **“Is it helpful to reach out to potential graduate supervisors before submitting the application, and if so what is the best way to do that without being intrusive?”**

While reaching out can give you an edge in research-focused streams, it isn't a universal rule. Some faculty find unsolicited outreach ahead of the application period inappropriate. To stay professional, always lead with a clear "why." Tailor your outreach and your application by demonstrating how your academic history directly supports their current projects.

*Tip: Develop a strong, focused idea of what you plan to research in the future and include in your letter.*

### **“Do you recommend exploring multiple paid/volunteer opportunities or building a relationship with one organization over a long period of time?”**

It depends! What are you interested in? If you are unsure that a certain path is right for you, this is the time to explore new opportunities and try new things. Staying for longer allows you to move up in the organization, but this won't be beneficial if it's not something you enjoy/can see yourself doing long-term.

*Tip: What will be sustainable for you and your lifestyle long-term?*

### **“When writing application letters, what's one important rule that often goes unsaid?”**

Don't be afraid to share your accomplishments! It's important to share what skills you have learned in your classes at McMaster and in your work experience. The person reviewing your application won't know about what you've done unless you share it with them.

*Tip: Don't use passive language, write as if you mean it! Use active verbs (e.g., "Instructed," "Analyzed," "Developed") instead.*

### **“Should I reach out to my professors at McMaster? I enjoy their classes but am unsure of what to say.”**

Yes, definitely! Professors are there to support their students and will chat about anything you are interested in- even if it's unrelated to the class!

*Tip: Use office hours as a low-pressure way to brainstorm your future academic interests!*



**“Can I contact faculty members if I’ve never taken their class?”**

Yes. If their research interests you, make that connection! Use the McMaster Academic Directory to find their contact info and send a professional introductory email expressing interest in their work.

*Tip: LinkedIn is a fantastic tool for networking and following their latest updates.*