Virtual Career Fairs Checklist for Career Services

A guide to planning your virtual career fair on Handshake

Create your virtual fair (8-10 weeks before)

Tip: Plan ahead around “peak season”, both to avoid employer schedule overload and to capture student mindshare.

- Fall peak days are typically Wednesdays and Thursdays from mid-September to early October.
- Spring peak days are typically Wednesdays and Thursdays from February to mid-March.

Resources:

Help Articles:
- Section 1 "Create and Configure Your Career Fair" in The Complete Guide to Handshake’s Virtual Fair
- Sharing an Event or Fair with Another Institution

Tips from Your Peers:
- Advice From Career Services on Hosting Virtual Fairs in Handshake

Invite employers to register for your fair (4-8 weeks before)

Goal: Aim for 80% of expected employer registrations and 80% of employer schedules created before inviting students.
**Tip:** Be ready to approve employers as they register so they can start creating their schedules.

**Resources:**

**Help Articles:**
- Inviting Employers to Virtual Fairs
- Approving Employer Registrations
- “Registrations” in Supporting Employers on Your Virtual Fair

**Email Templates:**
- Invite and Remind Employers About Key Fair Tasks

**Blogs:**
- Employer Sponsorships at Handshake Virtual Fairs

**Resources to Share With Employers:**
- Employer Playbook: A Step-by-Step Guide to Virtual Fairs in Handshake
- “Employer Training and Best Practices” section in the the Virtual Fair Launch Kit

**Remind employers to set up schedules (4-6 weeks before)**

**Note:** Historically, half of employers create their schedules more than 2 weeks in advance of the fair. Remind employers that completing their schedules late means they’ll miss out on students.

**Tips:**
- Encourage employers to lift qualifications on 1:1s if they’re seeing low signups.
- Help employers that aren’t as well-known with extra marketing via social media or email.
**Tips:**
(continued)

- Employers looking to hire should focus on filling up 1:1 sessions — the no-show rate is lower, indicating more motivated students.

**Resources:**

**Email Templates:**
- Template 4 in Invite and Remind Employers About Key Fair Tasks

**Help Articles:**
- (For employers) Creating a Schedule for Virtual Fairs
- (For career services) “Set and Manage a Schedule” in Supporting Employers on Your Virtual Fair

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**Invite students to register for the fair (3-4 weeks before)**

**Note:** Historically, half of students register within five days of the fair, and a third of students register the day of or the day before the fair. Inform employers they’ll likely see a surge in signups right before the fair.

**Tip:** Consider custom outreach by major or student organizations to boost turnout among students historically underrepresented at fairs.

**Resources:**

**Email Templates:**
- Templates 1 and 2 in Invite and Remind Students About Key Fair Tasks

**Resources to Share With Students:**
- “Student Training and Best Practices” section in the Virtual Fair Launch Kit
Send students weekly emails with reminders to sign up for employer sessions and best practices for attending virtual fairs (1-3 weeks before)

Goal: Aim for over 50% of registered students signed up for at least one employer session before the day of the fair.

Tips:

- Host pre-fair workshops for students to build interest and alleviate their concerns about attending a virtual career fair, like crafting an elevator pitch or standing out in virtual meetings.

- Send targeted emails to subsets of students promoting relevant employers. Or, work with employers on social media campaigns and events pre-fair.

- A strong marketing push in the day or two before a fair will go a long way. Use pre-built collateral from our Launch Kit to save time on outreach. See “Resources to Share With Students” below.

Resources:

Tips from Your Peers:

- Virtual Fair Marketing Tips from Stony Brook University

Resources to Share With Students:

- “Student Training and Best Practices” section in the Virtual Fair Launch Kit
Test your fair (1 week before)

**Tip:** Create a private virtual fair and sign up for sessions using dummy student and employer accounts to test your fair.

**Resources:**

- Help Articles:
  - Section 2 “Time to Test” in The Complete Guide to Handshake’s Virtual Fair
  - Handshake Video Test

It’s the big day! (Day of the fair)

**Tips:**

- Keep an eye on the Session Details page to monitor the progress of your fair.
- Hold drop-in Zoom support rooms for students and/or employers. Be sure to market your room well in advance so fair attendees know they can come to you for guidance.
- Open your Zoom support rooms an hour before the fair starts. Most institutions reported drop ins slowed down once the fair started.
- Keep a browser window open with relevant resources that you can quickly copy and share with students or employers if needed. See “Resources for Students and Employers” below.

**Resources:**

- Help Articles:
  - Day of the Fair for Career Services
  - Report a Technical Issue at Your Fair
  - “Day of the fair” in Supporting Employers on Your Virtual Fair
  - Supporting Students on Your Virtual Fair
**Tips from Your Peers:**
- Advice from a Career Services Pro on How to Staff Your Fair

**Resources for Students and Employers:**
- “Day of the Fair” section in the Virtual Fair Launch Kit

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**Report on your fair (After the fair)**

**Tips:**
- Use Handshake’s pre-built reports to easily measure fair engagement. Total student sessions (or “connections”) is a useful metric to demonstrate the ROI of your fair.

**Resources:**

**Help Articles:**
- Post Fair Reports and Session Info
- Pre-built Report Templates for Virtual Fairs

**Templates:**
- Sample Post-Fair Questions for Students and Employers

**Benchmark Report:**
- Handshake Fall 2020 Virtual Fair Benchmark Report

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**Want more virtual fair resources?**
Check out the Handshake Virtual Fair Launch Kit.