

# Starting your career in **Malaysia** Country Guide for International Students



**You chose to study in the United Kingdom. You are beginning to think about what your options are after graduation. Building on an excellent international education you are returning to your home country, Malaysia. You stand at the beginning of an exciting career, but what are the steps you need to take in order to find a suitable job, and where do you find the information you need?**

**This careers profile provides you with practical advice about returning to work in Malaysia to help you make a successful start in your career in the Malaysia labour market. Included are key facts about current trends and jobs in Malaysia industry, advice about seeking employment in Malaysia, hints and tips for making a successful application, and helpful information sources.**

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## Country profile

Malaysia has been a trade hub for many centuries due to its location close to the Strait of Malacca shipping lane, and its abundance of natural resources. Historically, materials such as rubber and tin were the main natural exports of Malaysia but this has been replaced by palm oil in recent years, as the demand for bio-fuel has increased dramatically. However, this may become increasingly restricted by the government, due to the effects of deforestation. In recent years, Malaysian industry has moved towards high-end electronics manufacturing, in particular computer hardware, and as a result is becoming increasingly involved with manufacturing than on the raw materials on which it previously depended. This has led to an intensely capitalist economy, and this rapid expansion mirrors that which the Four Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan) experienced, albeit later. Despite the worldwide monetary issues in 2008 which still linger, the Malaysian economy experienced growth in the aftermath, and expects continued future growth.

### **KEY FACTS: The Malaysian economy**

GDP per capita:	US\$4,640 (2010 est.)
Labour force:	11.3 million (2010 est.)
Unemployment rate:	4.4% (2010 est.)
Major sectors of occupation:	Manufacturing (45%), Services (45%), Agriculture (10%) (2009 est.)
Main trading partners:	The United States, Singapore, Japan, China and the EU

## Country profile

The Malaysian economy is boosted by a large number of young, educated and knowledgeable individuals which greatly improves the interests of foreign investors. As a graduate returning from experiences abroad, one can become an important part of this industrious and flexible labour force.

### **KEY FACTS: The Malaysian graduate labour market**

Average age at graduation:	24-25 for bachelor degree, due to later school start in comparison to many other nations.
Average graduate starting salary:	US\$4,500 for a fresh starter in a competitive business.
Average working week:	Government offices usually work between 8am-4.15pm weekdays and 8am-12.30pm Saturdays. In the private sector, it is typically Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. Government legislation stipulates that employees cannot be expected to work more than 8 hours per day, or 48 hours per week (except in special circumstances).
Holiday entitlement:	Annual leave varies but is usually around 14 days. Public holidays are set at 14 days per annum due to the diverse population and resulting religious celebrations/traditions that this involves.

# Benefits

## **Benefits of a UK qualification**

Possibly the largest benefit which all international students receive when studying at one of the over 100 universities in the UK, is the fact that UK universities have some of the most renowned and prestigious histories of higher education in the world. Even if a graduate does not study at one of the more famous institutions, the graduate can return to their home country safe in the knowledge that no matter where they look for work, their qualifications will be highly respected. This is also useful in job interview situations, in which your study in the UK can come into conversation as a point of interest and as an example of experience in situations of teamwork, cultural awareness, when possibly you were outside of your comfort zone. Furthermore, your experiences in writing and reading English are extremely valuable in the job market.

As an added benefit, you will no doubt have been exposed to a variety of accents and dialects during your study stay, making you more open to the English language than you may have realised.

### **Case study:**

Things are a lot different from Europe in education. I really enjoyed my time studying there, mostly because I got another side of how people can be and how they are taught. This made me much more open minded and I think this helped me in my independence levels. By this I mean that I was much more able to take initiative and have a better idea of what people are looking for from me, especially with international employers.

# Benefits

## Graduating: Searching for work

Not long ago, student life and job finding was a far simpler procedure. Graduates would simply leave university, either looking for work through friends and family, a large company or a local business, and often step into a full-time job after an interview. These days, a wider variety of options exist which match the wider variety of jobs and the ease of travel which is available to the worldly student. As the number of students increases, so does the quality of the competition.

It's tough out there. Many graduates having just left university know this, whilst others are soon to find out. Since so many new university leavers have a career path in mind which they may have had for many years, the competition is fierce in many of the desirable graduate schemes. This is more the case in the UK than almost anywhere else. However, one benefit which you as an international student have is that you have a home country to which you can return. The lack of vacancies in the UK has led to many British students leaving for work further afield, often with little experience of the language in that country outside of the native English speaking countries. For example, in China whilst there are some international companies which accept English-only students, the vast majority will prefer a candidate with some basic Chinese. If you are returning to your home country with a firm grasp of English as well as your mother tongue, you already have an advantage. It can be difficult to come across vacancies in graduate jobs, full-time occupation is hard to find without experience and most find that internships can involve heavy competition. All is not lost however! Most graduates find that the main issue is simply knowing where to look, and this guide hopes to point you in the right direction.

Check out the '**More Information**' section to see handy links with tips and advice in the search for work.

# Main routes to employment

## Getting started

It should be mentioned that although the standard of teaching in Malaysia is highly regarded internationally, having a qualification from a western area such as the EU or the US may help provide the edge over other candidates for jobs.

### Online recruitment and vacancy websites:

- Best Jobs: [www.bestjobs.com.my](http://www.bestjobs.com.my)
- Jac Recruitment: [www.jac-recruitment.my](http://www.jac-recruitment.my)
- Malaysia Jobs: [www.malaysiajobs.org](http://www.malaysiajobs.org)
- Monster: [www.monster.com.my](http://www.monster.com.my)
- Recruit Net: [www.malaysia.recruit.net](http://www.malaysia.recruit.net)

## Social networking

Social networking has become an increasingly common and important part of seeking work, especially with the social media generation. Sites such as Facebook.com and LinkedIn.com have flourished into everyday use for graduates and employers alike, in order to find the right person for the job. Graduates looking for work in their home nation may already be aware of the value of such sites, and may be aware of specific sites which are specialised in their own country. Graduates can place details of themselves including their job experience, education level, home/current university as well as a photo if preferred. On some of these sights they can also search for jobs according to their specific interest or area of study. What is clear is that graduates should certainly take the time to discover the potential job opportunities which these sites offer, both socially and at a socio-professional level.

The following list of examples is not exhaustive, and contains websites with varying emphasis on professionalism and social networking.

### Sites worth checking out (global):

- [www.ecademy.com](http://www.ecademy.com)
- [www.efactor.com](http://www.efactor.com)
- [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
- [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)
- [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)
- [www.plaxo.com](http://www.plaxo.com)
- [www.ryze.com](http://www.ryze.com)
- [www.spoke.com](http://www.spoke.com)
- [www.ziqqs.com](http://www.ziqqs.com)

# Main routes to employment

In Malaysia, there are several newspaper publications which may prove useful when looking for work.

## Key newspapers to look for:

- Business Times: [www.btimes.com.my](http://www.btimes.com.my)
- Harakah Daily: [www.harakahdaily.net](http://www.harakahdaily.net)
- New Straits Times: [www.nst.com.my](http://www.nst.com.my)
- The Borneo Post: [www.theborneopost.com](http://www.theborneopost.com)
- Utusan [www.utusan.com.my](http://www.utusan.com.my)

All of these publications could offer some insight into potential openings and job availability in Malaysia, or market conditions affecting different work sectors.

## Graduate jobs/Careers Fairs

An interesting way of finding work or further education is through graduate fairs. With varying focuses in each event, graduates can find themselves coming face to face with companies of interest, and may even find interest in something which was not previously considered.

Graduate fairs are also a good opportunity to find out about graduate schemes being offered by companies and what these entail.

Many fairs offer other facilities such as CV workshops, letter writing tuition and a chance to network with individuals representing companies of differing sizes and reputations, thus they can offer a good learning opportunity even if you struggle to find a company suited to you.

Many universities in the UK hold their own fairs near the end of the spring/summer term and throughout the summer, so it is well worth getting involved and putting yourself out there. There may also be fairs in your home country, whether a national event or a university which is local to you, so keep your eyes and ears open.



# Main routes to employment

You may find the following websites useful for locating fairs:

- [www.allyhunt.com/cms/career-fair-listings](http://www.allyhunt.com/cms/career-fair-listings) - Careers fairs in Malaysia
- [www.jobless.com.my/malaysia-career-training-fair-mctf-2010-organized-by-jobstreet-malaysia-bhd/](http://www.jobless.com.my/malaysia-career-training-fair-mctf-2010-organized-by-jobstreet-malaysia-bhd/) - An annual graduate fair, definitely worth checking out.
- [www.jobstreet.com.my/campus/campus\\_events.htm](http://www.jobstreet.com.my/campus/campus_events.htm) - Offers information on careers events
- [www.penexpo.com.my](http://www.penexpo.com.my) - This up-to-date, user-friendly and informative website contains information about a wide variety of trade and careers fairs
- [www.ukeconline.com/careerfair/](http://www.ukeconline.com/careerfair/) - Annual fair for Malaysian students held in the UK.

When searching the Internet for job offers and vacancies, it is advisable to bookmark webpage and re-visit them regularly. Make use of email alert services offered by online resources to stay updated with the newest jobs.

## Alternative sources of information on jobs and companies:

- Graduan: [www.graduan.com.my](http://www.graduan.com.my) Accessible and user-friendly site which offers good information for graduates.
- Jobs DB: [www.jobsdb.com.my/Malaysia](http://www.jobsdb.com.my/Malaysia) The Malaysian branch of this international website which focuses greatly upon the Asian jobs market.
- Job Street: [www.jobstreet.com.my](http://www.jobstreet.com.my) Useful website in which job searches can be categorised into relevant sections.

It is advisable to register with any employment agency up to one year before the date of your return to Malaysia and to register with a social/professional network as soon as possible to build up your network of contacts before your return home. Applications for a specific role, however, should be sent no sooner than one month before your scheduled return to your native country.

Kelly: [www.kellyservices.com.my](http://www.kellyservices.com.my) Major American recruitment agency with offices in Kuala Lumpur

## Main routes to employment

Another strategy that has proven successful for some applicants is to approach employers directly and send open applications to companies that you are interested in working for. An open application is an application that does not respond to a particular vacancy, and in some cases submitting an open application indicates a degree of creativity and your willingness to take initiative. Often, jobs in Malaysia are not detailed greatly in their descriptive overview. This means that an individual is expected to undertake a certain level of personal investigation, and to adapt their cover letter in order to suit the role which they are seeking within the company.

### The right skills and competencies

In Malaysia the standard of university education and education in general is high. The main weakness however is the lack of so-called 'soft skills' in business; skills such as communication, teamwork and networking. It is widely accepted that those who have studied abroad may find this to be an advantage, due to their exposure to foreign cultures and thus a possible higher level of cultural awareness. This, coupled with a high level of expertise in a chosen field and an increased likelihood of good English skills, will make returning graduates highly desirable.

#### Most wanted:

- Good communication skills.
- A positive attitude.
- The requisite skills for the job.
- Time management and organisational skills.

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### The application letter

A letter of application should attract the recruiter's attention. It should make the potential employer want to look at your application in more detail, read your CV and hopefully invite you for an interview.

Precision, a positive attitude and honesty are the keywords when writing your application letter. Your letter should explain your motivation for applying and portray the competencies and skills you have gained during your studies, previous work experience or elsewhere. Try to give concrete examples and avoid empty phrases. Above all, highlight why you are suitable for the job and why the job suits your individual talents and attitude. It is also sensible to state your level of English or other international languages at this stage as well as your mother tongue. In Malaysia, if you include a cover letter, this should typically not exceed one page in length.

# Main routes to employment

## **The curriculum vitae (CV) / résumé**

The CV or résumé is a tool which you can use to secure an interview with the employer; it is a way of marketing yourself. It should not be more than three pages long, and should usually be in reverse chronological order, so that your most recent experiences and education/employment are at the beginning. Your CV/résumé should list your personal details, education and employment history, relevant skills, qualifications, and extracurricular activities. With regard to personal information, name, date of birth, gender, marital status and number of children (if any) can be provided as well as contact details such as telephone, email and mobile phone details.

This information is not all necessary but may be used and is usually placed at the top of the first page. The subject of referees is usually kept until the end of the document, stating that referees are available on request. A passport-sized photo may also be attached, but is usually not necessary.

## **Digital applications**

Digital application forms have become more common in recent years. The Internet is considered a fast medium of communication but completing an application form online requires the utmost attention – always check your submission before pressing send.

If you are making your application via email, write a concise application email with your CV/résumé attached. Applicants should always remember to use formal language when submitting an online application or applying via email.

# Main routes to employment

## The job interview

Throughout the application procedure it is essential to make a good impression. Never lie or bend the truth during your interview, and avoid being pushy or showy. During the interview, appear interested and enthusiastic and try to stay calm even if you are feeling nervous.

Mention any personal acquaintances or connections you have with the company; networks can be important in Malaysia. Be polite and punctual but do not be afraid to check the meaning of questions and clarify points before responding. Be aware that nowadays psychometric tests are often used. You can find examples of such tests online for free such as [http://www.prospects.ac.uk/psychometric\\_tests.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/psychometric_tests.htm)

### Preparing for the interview:

- Know about the company you are trying to work for. This highlights that you are prepared and are thorough in your approach to work.
- Think in advance about questions that might be asked and prepare some possible responses.
- Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses and be honest about them, do not lie about or exaggerate your abilities. It is also useful to prepare answers which show how you are improving your weaknesses.
- Be aware of situations in which you have dealt with problems so that you can provide examples to the interviewer of how you can handle such instances.
- If the interviewer offers you a compliment, accept it gratefully and state that you hope that you have what the interviewer/company is looking for.

Some employers set entrance tests to enable them to judge more clearly each candidate's suitability for the job. These will mostly test general abilities, aptitudes and interests related to the job in question. At times, employers might conduct group interviews. You can therefore enquire about the structure and process of the interview in advance.

# Where will your career take you?

Research from the i-graduate International Student Barometer study tells us the following about the main career drivers for Malaysian graduates:

## **Major career drivers for Malaysian graduates:**

1. I want to develop myself.
2. Future job security is important to me.
3. I like to be recognised for my achievements.

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## **Top 3 future plans of Malaysian students about to graduate at UK HE Institutions:**

1. Employment in Malaysia.
2. Short term employment in the UK.
3. I am still undecided.

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## Current career prospects

There are indications that in Malaysia there are sectors with a demand for highly skilled labour offering plenty of job opportunities. However, due to increased levels of training the overall standard of graduates is improving, meaning that there will be greater competition for these positions. The current global economic crisis has caused the number of applications for online job advertisements to greatly increase, while at the same time fewer job advertisements have been published nationwide and beyond seasonal adjustments of labour demand. Malaysia has the potential to recuperate quickly from the financial crisis and move on to a very promising business future, with possibilities for those highly educated in their field and with good core skills such as communication and a positive attitude.

### Where are the opportunities?

#### Accounting and finance

In Malaysia, accountants must be registered with the MIA (Malaysian Institute of Accountants) or the MICPA (Malaysian Institute for Certified Public Accountants) in order to work and be seriously considered as a candidate. There are places available for promising graduates in this field, but as with many of the large financial sectors of the world, Malaysian accountancy firms have a high standard of recruitment protocol. If one has experience of living abroad however, then this will be taken into account and is likely to be an advantage over other applicants who lack such experience.

#### Advanced manufacturing

Making up the largest section of the Malaysian economy, manufacturing has been abundant in Malaysia in recent years. As a result, the numbers needed to sustain the demand for this expanding enterprise have also increased and one could see this market as being an important opportunity to gain a foothold. Specialising mainly in electronics and particularly computer hardware, Malaysia has an important part to play in coming years with the continued global dependence upon computers and the need for ever-cheaper technology.

# Current career prospects

## **Agriculture**

Agriculture in Malaysia has been expanding rapidly in recent years due to the increasing numbers and size of palm oil plantations. Despite controversial deforestation methods by some of the plantations, the market for palm oil for use in the bio-fuel market remains extremely strong and presents grounds for continued expansion. This sector, alongside more traditional cultivation in Malaysia, offers opportunities for a graduate seeking a promising career in renewable fuel sources.

## **Architecture, planning and construction**

Due to its openness to both Western and Eastern influences, Malaysia has managed to create an interesting architectural heritage through diversity. The architectural industry is required for many different categories of work, from mosques and temples to modern high-rise buildings and apartments. The magnificent Petronas towers in Kuala Lumpur are one of the best examples of the unique architectural position of Malaysia. Though suffering at the hands of the financial crisis, the architectural field is now looking to re-strengthen itself.

## **Biotechnology**

Malaysia has an increasing role to play in the biotechnology industry after a slow start compared to leading countries in the field. With a focus mainly on food technology and pharmaceuticals as well as herbal remedies, the progression is backed by the National Biotechnology Directorate (Biotek) established in 1996 which helps to manage and assist the different biotechnology methods used in Malaysia through organisation and communication. The main future potential for biotechnology in Malaysia may stem from the palm oil industry, which must utilise biotechnology in order to maximise crop yield without expanding into Malaysian rainforest, which has become limited due to deforestation.

## **ICT and e-commerce**

With around 2,000 ICT companies operating in and around Malaysia, there is no shortage of choice when it comes to applying for work in the ICT and e-commerce sector. In fact, the government has contributed billions of ringgit in order to secure the market against the recession. Although this has led to mixed opinions regarding the amount put forward (some suggest that more will be needed over the long term) providing the ICT and e-commerce markets remain stable in Malaysia, the sector offers good opportunities for a career path.

# Where to find more information

## General information

Governmental Websites & Official Information:

[www.lam.gov.my/codeofconduct.html](http://www.lam.gov.my/codeofconduct.html) The Board of Architects in Malaysia website:

[www.kln.gov.my/perwakilan/london](http://www.kln.gov.my/perwakilan/london) Ministry of Foreign Affairs/High Commission of Malaysia in London

## Advice and tips on Careers Fairs, CVs and general job seeking

[www.articlealley.com/article\\_1547972\\_36.html](http://www.articlealley.com/article_1547972_36.html) - An article for those in the nursing profession.

[www.collegegrad.com/articles/dont-give-up.shtml](http://www.collegegrad.com/articles/dont-give-up.shtml) - An article on staying positive throughout the work search process

[www.employmentblawg.com/2010/job-seeking-tips-for-college-graduates](http://www.employmentblawg.com/2010/job-seeking-tips-for-college-graduates) - Further tips in the competitive field of employment seeking graduates

[www.fpef.org/Education/Tips.htm](http://www.fpef.org/Education/Tips.htm) - Some good tips on networking

[www.thegraduate.co.uk/static\\_generic.cgi?a=tmq\\_jobboards](http://www.thegraduate.co.uk/static_generic.cgi?a=tmq_jobboards) – Link with good information for those still considering staying in the UK after study

[www.graduateopportunities.com/career\\_advice/graduates\\_with\\_disability](http://www.graduateopportunities.com/career_advice/graduates_with_disability) - A link providing useful tips and stats for graduates with a disability

[www.londongradfair.co.uk/autumn](http://www.londongradfair.co.uk/autumn) - The Guardian's annual job fair for graduates. It is located in London.

[www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article1277.html](http://www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article1277.html) - Tips on how to work out your finances post-study.

[www.online-graduate.co.uk/tipsforgrads.html](http://www.online-graduate.co.uk/tipsforgrads.html) - Further tips for graduates seeking work experience.

[http://www.prospects.ac.uk/international\\_students.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/international_students.htm) - Information for international students



# Where to find more information

## Books and Articles

Active Labour Market Policies around the World: Coping with the Consequences; Auer, P., Efendioğlu, U., Leschke, J (2005)

[www.malaysia-students.com](http://www.malaysia-students.com) Interesting blog page for Malaysian students

[www.theworkinggal.blogspot.com](http://www.theworkinggal.blogspot.com) An informal, enjoyable and informative blog for careers and general Malaysian information

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## Disclaimer

Whilst all efforts have been made to ensure the information in this Country Guide is correct at the time of writing, readers are advised that procedures and information sources may change regularly.

# Appendix 1 : Sample CV/Résumé

John Alexander Smith

Address:

Phone number: 00 0000000 Mobile: +00 (0) 0000000

E-mail: Smith@mobility.com.my

Date of Birth: 01 January 1986

Nationality: Malaysian

Marital Status: Single

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## EDUCATION

MBA Candidate

JUNE 2003

*INSEAD (Singapore Campus)*

*Singapore*

- President of Developing Economies Association

BS ECONOMICS

JUNE 1997

Stanford University

*Palo Alto, CA, USA*

- GPA: 3.97/4.0
- President of Islamic Students Association

## AWARDS

Detail any awards received here.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

CREDIT RISK ANALYST

JAN. 1998 – JULY 2001

*ABN AMRO Bank N.V.*

*Kuala Lumpur,*

*Malaysia*

- Orchestrated USD 8 billion aircraft finance deal with Malaysian Airways
- Restructured USD 56 million loan to Petronas

## SKILLS

- Fluent in English, Malay, Indonesian and Mandarin
- Proficient in HTML, Java and PHP

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

List any Professional Affiliations here

## VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

List any volunteer experience here

# Appendix 1 : Sample CV/Résumé

## PERSONAL

- Hobbies include: reading, travelling, studying
- Fields of interest:

## REFERENCES

Provided upon request.

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