

Starting your career in Nigeria 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, Nigeria. 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 Nigeria to help you make a successful start in your career in the Nigeria labour market. Included are key facts about current trends and jobs in Nigeria industry, advice about seeking employment in Nigeria, hints and tips for making a successful application, and helpful information sources.

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Country profile

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is an emerging market with a rapidly growing economy. Striving to overcome the political and economic instability of the past, Nigeria has been working towards a more positive economic climate over recent years. Reforms were introduced to improve infrastructure, to enhance macro-economic management and to fight corruption. A further aim is to attract foreign investments and to diversify the domestic economy, which is at present highly dependent on the oil industry.

With over 150 million citizens, Nigeria is the most populous country on the African continent, bearing enormous commercial potential. The Nigerian government, under President Umaru Yar'Adua, has announced the goal of developing the economy of Nigeria into one of the biggest economies in the world by 2020. However, a substantial part of the population continues to live in extreme poverty, whilst other domestic problems such as unemployment and poor healthcare are fuelled by the current global financial crisis.

KEY FACTS: The Nigerian economy

GDP real growth 2009:	5% (est.)
GDP per capita:	US\$2,500 (2009 est.)
Labour force 2009:	47.33 million people (est.)
Unemployment rate 2009:	4.9% (est.)
Major sectors of occupation:	Industry (40%) Services (40%), Agriculture (20%)
Main trading partners:	The United States, Brazil, Spain, India, the Netherlands, South Korea, the United Kingdom and France.

Country profile

In 1973 the Nigerian government founded the Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC), aimed at uniting a divided country and encompassing more than 250 different ethnic groups. Graduates from universities and from polytechnic universities are required to enroll in one-year programmes and are sent to other parts of Nigeria away from their state of origin. Among other things, this state service works as a generator of jobs. Foreign trained graduates have to report to the NYSC Directorate upon returning to Nigeria, before being mobilised for one of the service schemes.

For more information have a look at the frequently asked questions on the NYSC website, www.nysc.gov.ng/faq.php

KEY FACTS: The Nigerian graduate labour market

Average age at graduation:	24
Average graduate starting salary:	US\$2,400 per annum.
Average working week:	Monday to Friday, approximately 35-40 hours (full-time)
Holiday entitlement:	Minimum 6 working days of paid leave per annum

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

The biggest thing for me was that after studying in the UK, my language skills increased a lot. When I came, I had good knowledge of the language out of the book, but not from dealing with people face-to-face. This made such a big difference in how relaxed I could be in an international business setting, as I felt that after dealing with people it was most natural too, it could only get easier.

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.

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

As a graduate looking for work in Nigeria, you should use a variety of strategies, websites being an important starting point in looking for an occupation.

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

Online recruitment and vacancy websites:

- 2NIGERIA: www.2nigeria.com
- All Jobs Nigeria: www.alljobsnigeria.com/forum/index.php
- Careers NG: www.careersng.com
- Careers Nigeria: www.careersnigeria.com
- Job Center Nigeria: www.jobcentrenigeria.com/about
- Nairaland Jobs: www.nairaland.com/nigeria/board-29.0.html
- Naija Hot Jobs: www.naijahotjobs.com
- Nigeria Galleria: www.nigeriagalleria.com
- Nigeria Jobs: <http://ng.3wjobs.com/>
- Nigeria Jobs Online: www.nigeriajobsonline.com
- Nigerian Jobs: www.nigeriancareers.blogspot.com
- The Nigerian Guardian online: www.ngrguardiannews.com
- Wazobia Jobs: www.wazobiajobs.com

Career information on oil and gas jobs:

- ADDAX Petroleum Development: www.netserveafrica.com/jobs/addaxjobs.php
- Chevron Nigeria Limited: <http://careers.chevron.com>
- Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited (NLNG): www.nlng.com/NLNGnew/careers/default.htm
- Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC): www.nnpcgroup.com
- Oando Plc: www.oandopl.com/nigeria/about-oando/careers
- Schlumberger Oilfield Services: www.careers.slb.com
- Shell Nigeria: www.shell.com/home/content/nigeria
- Statoil: <http://www.statoil.com/en/Pages/default.aspx>
- Texaco Nigeria Plc: www.texaco.com/about
- Total Nigeria Plc: <http://careers.total.com/careersFO/careers/home>
- Willbros Group: www.willbros.com/fw/main/Overview-137.html

Main routes to employment

Another strategy that has proven successful for some applicants is to approach employers directly and send open applications to companies you are interested in working for. An open application is an application that does not respond to a particular vacancy. In some cases submitting an open application indicates a degree of creativity and your willingness to take initiative.

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 sites 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
- www.efactor.com
- www.facebook.com
- www.linkedin.com
- www.myspace.com
- www.plaxo.com
- www.ryze.com
- www.spoke.com
- www.ziggs.com

As a graduate looking for work in Nigeria, you should use a variety of strategies. Newspapers are good starting points when it comes to the Nigerian job-hunt. They provide you with the latest news about the economy and the labour market while helping you to pick up on social developments and events.

Main routes to employment

Key newspapers to look for:

- Business Day: www.businessdayonline.com
- Leadership Nigeria: www.leadershipnigeria.com
- The Daily Independent: www.independentngonline.com
- The Daily Sun: www.sunnewsonline.com
- The Financial Standard (FS): www.financialstandardnews.com
- The New Nigerian: www.newnigeriannews.com
- The Nigerian Guardian (vacancies on Tuesdays and Thursdays):
www.ngrguardiannews.com
- The Nigerian Tribune: www.tribune.com.ng
- The Times of Nigeria: www.thetimesofnigeria.com
- This Day: www.thisdayonline.com
- Vanguard: www.vanguardngr.com

However, not all job vacancies are advertised in newspapers. Therefore, consider using alternative sources; persistency and well-developed detection skills will help you to discover the hidden jobs.

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, therefore 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:

- 2 Nigeria: www.2nigeria.com
- www.nigeriafilms.com/news/7831/10/creative-careers-fair-launch-in-nigeria-for-tv-fil.html - Fair in Lagos for the Film & TV sector.
- www.elitenigeriancareers.com - A professional site looking to link top graduates with top companies.

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

Traditionally, newspapers and other print media are the most prominent source of jobs postings as they are easily accessible. However, the digital revolution has slowly paved the way for a number of online job and recruitment sites.

Alternative sources of information on jobs and companies:

- All Africa: www.allafrica.com/nigeria
- Business Directory:Nigeria Galleria, www.nigeriagalleria.com/Nigeria_Business_Directory.html
- Business Hallmark: www.bizhallmark.com online news portal
- GAMGI: www.gamji.com online news forum with emphasis on Northern Nigeria:
- NgEX: www.ngex.com Nigerian business information and news
- Nigerian Yellow Pages: www.nigerianyellowpages.com
- The Nigeria Business.com: www.thenigeriabusiness.com
- The NigeriaBiz.com: www.thenigeriabiz.com

When looking for a job, it is important to extend your network of contacts. Spread the news that you are looking for work. Inform not only your relatives but also friends, former professors and teachers, neighbours and other acquaintances. Tell them what kind of job or position you are looking for.

You do not necessarily have to close connections with individuals in high positions in order to get a good job, but a solid network and wide-spread contacts will be advantageous. Attending career fairs and joining professional networks can help you get in touch with valuable new contacts.

Main routes to employment

The right skills and competencies

Often in Nigeria your academic qualifications can be valued above your practical experience. Make sure to emphasize these qualifications during your interview, but also in your CV and application letter. Be sure to explain any important skills you possess.

Most wanted:

- An outstanding academic record.
- Quantifiable qualitative accomplishments.
- Applied technical skills.
- Time management and organisational skills.
- International experience.

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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/ résumé 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.

A good strategy is to personalise the letter as much as possible. That means that you should rewrite it each time you send it in order to fit the profile mentioned in the vacancy. It is advisable to find out the name, title and position of the person the letter is addressed to beforehand, in order to avoid the standard line 'Dear sir or madam...'

Don't forget to include a phone number on which you can be contacted and thank the addressee for his/her time and consideration.

Main routes to employment

The curriculum vitae (CV) / résumé

The CV (curriculum vitae) or résumé is an important part of the job application. It is typically one to two pages long, and should be concise, well structured and interesting to read. Your CV/ résumé should list your personal details (name, address, phone number, email address, date of birth, country and state of origin), education and employment history (don't include minor achievements or primary education), relevant skills, qualifications, and extracurricular activities.

Referees and their contact details are usually listed at the bottom of the CV/résumé. Depending on the job you are applying for, this can be a teacher or former professor, an employer, perhaps a supervisor or colleague. Usually two referees should be enough. Always ask the respective person's permission first.

Keep your CV/ résumé as up-to-date as possible. And note that, just like the application letter, you should apply and edit your CV to fit the profile required in the job advertisement. This means you should emphasise the skills and competencies most relevant to the job description.

For example, if the position in question is in the field of research, you should highlight your academic achievements, whereas a CV/ résumé for a commercial position might require more practical experience.

Digital applications

Digital application forms are becoming more common. The Internet is considered a fast medium of communication but completing an application form online requires the utmost attention – always double check it before pressing 'send'.

If you are sending 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.

Preparing for the interview:

- Think in advance about questions that might be asked.
- Find out the objectives of the position and the skills required.
- Research the organisation's background.
- Be clear about your skills, abilities, personal qualities and experience.
- Prepare your own questions to ask the employer.
- Make sure you arrive on time for the interview. If you are unfamiliar with the location it might be worthwhile checking it out 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 Nigerian graduates

Major career drivers for Nigerian graduates:

1. I want to develop myself.
2. I want to make a difference to the world.
3. Future job security is important to me.

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Top 3 future plans of Nigerian students about to graduate from UK HE Institutions:

1. Migration / permanent residence.
2. Short term employment in the UK.
3. Employment in Nigeria.
3. Further study at my institution

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Current career prospects

Diversifying the economy and reducing its sole dependence on the oil and gas sector plays an important role in Nigeria's economic policy-making, which aims to increase the competitiveness of local businesses.

As a developing country, Nigeria continues to be challenged by a shortage of skilled labour. After decades of brain drain, the Nigerian government is eager to encourage the reverse movement, brain gain. Local companies welcome returnees with overseas experience and training.

This creates vast numbers of opportunities for highly trained graduates, willing to invest their knowledge and expertise gained throughout their studies. Nevertheless, a comparatively high unemployment rate makes the Nigerian labour market an exceedingly competitive environment.

Where are the opportunities?

Accounting and finance

The finance sector in Nigeria is particularly competitive, as a career in finance is seen as prestigious and moreover it is well paid. However, there are currently more job seekers than vacancies available.

Entering this sector at graduate-level depends not only on opportunity and availability; recruiters tend to seek applicants with degrees in Mathematics and Statistics, whereas Accountancy is not always the most sought after qualification.

The consolidation of banks in Nigeria is an excellent reflection of the positive impact of the latest reform process in this sector. Smaller institutions merged, and are now forming strong alliances.

However, as the result of a 2009 audit of all 24 Nigerian banks conducted by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), nine institutes were found to have liquidity too unstable to support their current operations, while four banks were found to be in a critical financial position. On the basis of this audit CBN has suggested measures to address the shortcomings, in order to regulate and strengthen the financial sector and boost national economic growth.

Current career prospects

Agriculture

Just over half of Nigeria's population live in rural areas and are involved in some form of agricultural production. The climatic conditions, soil and water resources as well as the necessary manpower predestine Nigeria to regain its former status as an exporter of food and other agricultural products. Grasslands in the Northern regions of the country provide an ideal ranching environment. In order to boost agricultural production, further investments into research, policy development, planning and agricultural management are needed.

Automotive Industry

The automotive industry encompasses various fields, such as manufacturing, assembly, sales and maintenance. Locally assembled automotives still lack a domestic market, as about 85% of the vehicles on Nigeria's roads were bought second hand. A growing demand for motorcycles and farming vehicles can be attested, and further investments are required to cater for this need.

Construction and Infrastructure

There are local infrastructure and construction projects funded by both the public sector and the private sector. Current projects involve real estate development, but also tourism and leisure ventures, shopping centres, schools, hospitals etc. Suppliers of building and construction materials and equipment are expected to profit from the positive developments in this sector.

Engineering

A career in engineering requires plenty of hands-on experience that goes beyond mere academic training. Voluntary work and internships are common ways to gather experience in the field.

Graduates and young professionals will have to present proof of their commitment to develop and of their strong determination to stay ahead of the competition. Employers are looking for talent that will add value to their organisation. Generally they do not wish to invest in training a person, and will usually make sure they hire someone who will settle in smoothly.

Current career prospects

Oil and gas industry

The oil and gas industry is the backbone of the Nigerian economy, and therefore it is difficult to overlook when searching for work. The wealth of oil has drawn multinationals, like Royal Dutch Shell and BP, to Nigeria. However, civil unrest in the past and political activism with regard to the multinationals' environmental responsibility has been jeopardising foreign investments in the oil sector.

This industry attracts many graduates from Nigeria and from abroad with attractive salaries and welfare benefits. There are plenty of work opportunities for engineers, and this sector also offers vacancies for HR professionals, as well as roles in administration, finance, marketing, IT etc. Many graduates looking for work in the oil and gas sector complete an internship in a small or medium sized company first, in order to enhance their CV. See Page 3: Corporate Careers Information on Oil and Gas Jobs for websites for instructions on how to apply for internships and jobs in this sector.

Health and medical care

Improving the population's health by strengthening the country's health and medical care sector is a major concern of the Nigerian government. With illnesses like Polio, Malaria and Tuberculosis continuing to cost lives and public access to health care being limited, the sector remains desperate for improvements.

Most medical vacancies are not actually advertised as the industry recruits most of their staff directly at Nigerian institutions of training and higher education. Whether you are planning to work as a doctor, a nurse, a researcher, a pharmacist, etc., there is currently a high demand for skilled labour. The easiest way to find a suitable position is via a personal network, e.g. professors, professionals, alumni links with your institution and colleagues.

ICT and e-commerce

The ICT sector in Nigeria is comparably young, but growing rapidly. Throughout recent years, it has become a more rewarding field for graduates to work in. IT skills are no longer only limited to jobs in telecommunication and IT companies; skills are increasingly transferrable to other business sectors as well. There is currently a rising demand for service, especially in currently under-served rural areas. E-commerce and online-banking too have expanded rapidly, creating a growing demand for professionals willing to work in this sector. Since work experience can be a key factor in the job search, most graduates start work as freelancers, to gain more professional insight.

Current career prospects

Logistics

With a still underdeveloped infrastructure, this sector is growing slowly. Requirements for a graduate position in logistics depend on the particular area of work an organisation is involved in. Salaries vary, depending on experience and qualifications. Recruiters commonly look for professionals with the ability to work under pressure, an eye for detail and a high degree of flexibility.

Non-profit sector

Job opportunities for graduates in the non-profit sector can be found across all sectors. Vacancies range from legal and financial advisors to researchers. Medical staff, project managers and engineers are also needed. Recruiters tend to look for candidates that show goal-oriented thinking and the ability to solve problems.

Where to find more information

General information

Corporate Affairs Commission Nigeria: www.cac.gov.ng

Federal Ministry of Finance Nigeria: www.fmf.gov.ng

Motherland: www.motherlandnigeria.com

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS): www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/index.php

National Planning Commission: www.npc.gov.ng

Plot 421 Constitution Avenue Central Business District F.C.T, Abuja, Nigeria

Nigerian Diaspora Organisation UK: www.nidoeurope.org/nidouksouthdoc.html

731 Charnwood, High Road, Buckhurst Hill IG9 5HW, Essex, The United Kingdom

Nigeria First: www.nigeriafirst.org Official website of Public Communications, Statehouse Abuja

International Centre for Nigerian Law: info@nigeria-law.org

The National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria: www.nassnig.org

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

www.articlealley.com/article_1547972_36.html - An article for those in the nursing profession

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 - Further tips in the competitive field of employment seeking graduates

www.fpef.org/Education/Tips.htm - Some good tips on networking.

www.thegraduate.co.uk/static_generic.cgi?a=tmg_jobboards – Link with good information for those still considering staying in the UK after study

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 - The Guardian's annual job fair for graduates. It is located in London.

www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article1277.html - Tips on how to work out your finances post-study.

www.online-graduate.co.uk/tipsforgrads.html - Further tips for graduates seeking work experience.

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/international_students.htm - Information for international students

Where to find more information

Books and Articles:

<http://backtonaija.blogspot.com/2008/08/how-do-i-go-about-finding-good-job-in.html>

Nigeria Industrial and Business Directory; (International Business Publications Inc, 2006), ISBN 9780739797136.

When I moved back to Nigeria... Finding work in Nigeria: www.back2naija.com Back 2 Naija

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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

John Smith

Home address: 5 My, Columbia Road, Small Town, O12 13P

Term address: Flat 1, City Road, University Town, S10 11T

Telephone: 00 12 345678

Email: J.Smith@hotmail.com

Date of Birth: 01/01/1980

EDUCATION

1999-2002 **The University of Middletown**

BSc (Hons) Business Administration (2:1)

Specialised in financial economics. Main modules included Marketing Management, International Accounting, Finance, Business Information Management, International Law and Advanced Business Methods.

Final year project: Customer Value in the Non Profit sector

1993-1999 **Small Town 10th Development College**

A Levels: Mathematics (B), English (C), Physics (C)

GCSEs: 8 GCSE's A-C

WORK EXPERIENCE

Summer 1999 **Receptionist at Inn Hotel**

- Prepared invoices
- Checking in and checking out of guests
- Deal with complaints of guests

Summer 2001 **Marketing assistant**

- Marketing of the company brand
- Analysing and interpreting marketing research results

POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- Captain of football team at University. Organised practices and social events
- Involved in Buddy programme. Was responsible for a group of fifteen first years, making sure they settled in
- Student Assistant Marketing. Involved assisting in retrieving and coding documents

ACTIVITIES/INTERESTS

- Sport: Committed member of the football team throughout university
- Travel: I enjoy travelling and getting to know new cultures. I travelled through various countries in Asia and Latin America.
- Other: Watching Spanish movies, Latin American Literature, watching football.

SKILLS

- Driving: Full licence
- IT: Familiar with Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Dreamweaver

Appendix 1 : Sample CV

- Languages: Basic French and Spanish, fluent in German

REFEREES

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