



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

## CONTENTS

**Country profile**

**Benefits**

**Main routes to employment**

**Where will your career take you?**

**Current career prospects**

**Where to find more information**

**Appendix 1: CV**

# Country profile

With a prospering free-market economy, the United Arab Emirates ranks amongst the most developed nations both regionally as well as globally. As dropping oil prices have had a negative effect on government revenue in the past, the government has recently begun to pursue a policy of economic diversification with the aim of reducing the reliance on oil. This, alongside the incorporation of more UAE nationals into the labour market, is challenging the sustainability of the Gulf economy. In the years to come, the national education sector will need to be reinforced, whilst employment is expected to shift towards an increase in the private sector.

## KEY FACTS: The economy of the UAE

GDP real growth 2010:	2% (2010 est.)
GDP per capita:	US\$49,995 (2010 est.)
Labour force:	3.168 million (2010 est.)
Unemployment rate:	4% (2010 est.)
Major sectors of occupation:	Oil and gas, petrochemicals, manufacturing, construction, shipping, tourism, retail, telecommunications
Main trading partners:	China, Japan, India, USA, UK, Germany, Italy, South Korea, Thailand

Initial steps to restructure the UAE's economy have proven successful. Free trade zones have been attracting foreign investment throughout the recent decades. The national industries developed further and ports have turned into trade centres, while land reclamation has made the import of vegetables and fruit largely superfluous.

## KEY FACTS: The UAE's graduate labour market

Average age at graduation:	22-24 years
Average graduate starting salary:	US\$15,000 (per month and tax free)
Average working week:	5 days a week, Sunday to Thursday, 48 hours (full-time, reduced during Ramadan)
Holiday entitlement:	21 days (additionally 20-30 days of unpaid leave for pilgrimage)

# 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.

## 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 the 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. 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 the United Arab Emirates, you should use a variety of strategies. Newspapers are a helpful starting point when it comes to the job-hunt, but using the Internet to advertise vacancies is becoming more common.

When searching the Internet for job offers and vacancies, it is advisable to bookmark webpages 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:

- AME info: [www.ameinfo.com/](http://www.ameinfo.com/)
- Bayt: [www.bayt.com/](http://www.bayt.com/)
- Career Gate: [www.careergate.ae/](http://www.careergate.ae/)
- Career Middle East: [www.careermideast.com/en/default.aspx](http://www.careermideast.com/en/default.aspx)
- Ershaad: [www.ershaad.ae/](http://www.ershaad.ae/)
- Emirates group careers: [www.emiratesgroupcareers.com/english/](http://www.emiratesgroupcareers.com/english/)
- Gulf Talent: [www.gultalent.com/home/index.php](http://www.gultalent.com/home/index.php)
- Gulf jobsites: [www.gulfjobsites.com/](http://www.gulfjobsites.com/)
- International Business Women's Group: [www.lbwgdubai.com](http://www.lbwgdubai.com)
- Monster Jobs: [www.monstergulf.com/](http://www.monstergulf.com/)
- Naukrigulf: [www.naukrigulf.com/](http://www.naukrigulf.com/)
- Ten jobs: [www.tenjobs.com/](http://www.tenjobs.com/)
- The National Human Resource Development and Employment Authority [www.tanmia.ae/tanmia/general/index\\_new.aspx](http://www.tanmia.ae/tanmia/general/index_new.aspx)
- UAE Graduate: [www.uaegraduate.com/ver2.php](http://www.uaegraduate.com/ver2.php)

## 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 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 you 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.

# Main routes to employment

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.ziggs.com](http://www.ziggs.com)

## Key newspapers to look for:

- Gulf News
- Khaleej Times

## Online newspaper sites in English:

- Arabian Business: [www.arabianbusiness.com](http://www.arabianbusiness.com)
- Dubai Chronicle: [www.dubaichronicle.com](http://www.dubaichronicle.com)
- Emarat Business: [www.emaratbusiness.com](http://www.emaratbusiness.com)
- The National: [www.thenational.ae](http://www.thenational.ae)

Many vacancies are not advertised in newspapers or on job websites. Therefore, the use of alternative sources, persistency and well developed detection skills will help you to discover the hidden jobs.

When looking for a job, it is important to extend your network of contacts. Let not only your relatives but also friends, former professors and teachers, neighbours and other acquaintances know that you are searching for a job and tell them what kind of job or position you are looking for.

Don't just wait for the ideal vacancy to appear in the newspaper or on a job site. Browse company websites and look for job openings advertised by organisations' human resource departments.

# Main routes to employment

## 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 early. 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.

The website [www.adippec.com](http://www.adippec.com) offers help to those seeking graduate schemes and work, whilst [www.usegtours.com/useg\\_fairs.htm](http://www.usegtours.com/useg_fairs.htm) lists some graduate careers fairs available in the Middle East. Fees are applicable for attendance at careers fairs.

## Alternative sources of information on jobs and companies:

Having a recruitment agency assist you can also be a successful strategy. The agency can mediate between you and the future employer and arrange interviews. Phoning your agent regularly and getting acquainted will eventually benefit your job search.

## Recruitment agencies:

- Aamal Recruitment / Clarendon Parker (Abu Dhabi, Dubai)  
[www.claredonparker.com/new/pages/aamalae.asp](http://www.claredonparker.com/new/pages/aamalae.asp)
- Al Hamed Enterprises, EMASCO (Abu Dhabi, Dubai) [www.alhamed.com](http://www.alhamed.com)
- Bayt (online recruitment and career guidance) [www.bayt.com/](http://www.bayt.com/)
- First Select (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman) [www.firstselectinternational.com/](http://www.firstselectinternational.com/)
- Gulf Talent (Dubai) [www.gulftalent.com/home/index.php](http://www.gulftalent.com/home/index.php)
- iQ Selection (Dubai) [www.iqselection.com/content/default.aspx](http://www.iqselection.com/content/default.aspx)
- Kershaw Leonard (Middle East) <http://www.kershawleonard.net/>
- Nadia Recruitment (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah) [www.nadia-me.com/](http://www.nadia-me.com/)
- Recruit Gulf, recruitment and career advice (Abu Dhabi, Dubai) [www.recruitgulf.com/](http://www.recruitgulf.com/)
- Tanmia, National Human Resources Development and Employment Authority  
[www.tanmia.ae/tanmia/general/index\\_new.aspx](http://www.tanmia.ae/tanmia/general/index_new.aspx)

# Main routes to employment

A general word of advice: make sure the job you accept is the job you really want. This is of course always important, but particularly in the United Arab Emirates where the law aims to stop employees from job-hopping. The law enables employers to give you a (minimum) six month ban from working in the United Arab Emirates if you resign from a job. If you accept just any job, you are likely to end up doing that job for a longer period than initially planned. Only if your employer is in favour of your resignation will they co-operate to enable you to change jobs without unnecessary delays.

## The right skills and competencies

Growing competition on the labour market demands that your application and your skills distinguish you from other candidates. It is essential therefore to avoid common mistakes that might create a negative impression.

### Most wanted:

- Knowledge of the respective market the applicant intends to work in.
- High expertise in (a) particular field(s) of study.
- Strong communication and networking skills.
- The ability to work in a team.
- Management and organisational skills.
- Courtesy and respectful behaviour.

©ELM 2010

## The application letter

When replying to an advertisement by mail, you should send your typed CV with a photograph (optional), accompanied by a typed letter explaining why you are the best candidate for the job. The application letter should emphasise your motivation to work for the specific company. The aim of your letter is to be offered an invitation for an interview.

It is important that the letter allows the recruiter to see your genuine interest not only in the respective position, but also in the company. You can usually find specific information about the company to which you are applying on their corporate website.

# Main routes to employment

## The curriculum vitae (CV)

If you were born a United Arab Emirates citizen, you will be required to indicate this in your CV under 'Citizenship/Visa status'. Having recently graduated, you may not necessarily have a lot of work experience. Nevertheless you should list all activities that have prepared you for the position in question, such as courses, projects or related research. Also give an overview of your skills, in particular with regard to IT, languages, management and presentations.

## Digital applications

Digital application forms have become more common. 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 attached. Applicants should always remember to use formal language when submitting an online application or applying via email.

## The job interview

For any job interview it is important to know your own strengths and weaknesses. You should take some time before the interview to research the market and sector you want to work in, familiarising yourself with the latest developments. Bring original diplomas and certificates to the interview as well as an extra copy of your CV.

### Preparing for the interview:

- Find out more about the objectives of the position and the skills required.
- Think in advance about questions that might be asked
- Research the organisation's background.
- Be clear about your skills, abilities, personal qualities and experience.
- Define what your added value to the company would be if hired.
- 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.

In a lot of cases a recruiter will interview a candidate more than once. It can often take several weeks before you receive another invitation. It is common to follow-up an interview with a letter/email or by phone, reiterating your interest in the position and thanking the recruiter for the time and effort invested by them.

# Where will your career take you?

Research from the i-graduate International Student Barometer (ISB) tells us the following about the main career drivers for Emirati graduates:

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

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

©International Student Barometer Summer 2009

## **Top 3 future plans of Emirati students about to graduate from UK HE Institutions:**

1. Employment in the UK.
2. Undecided.
3. Future study at this institution.

©International Student Barometer Summer 2009

As labour market research in the UAE shows, there is a notable reluctance to enter the private sector. A recent government study on 'Attitudes to the Private Sector' indicates that the vast majority of Emirati graduates associate increased job security, fewer working hours and a better salary with employment by the government or a semi-governmental organisation.

# Current career prospects

A huge expatriate workforce is employed in the United Arab Emirates. Presently, only 25-35% of the working population are UAE nationals. The diversity of the workforce is a distinctive characteristic of the country.

With over half of the UAE citizens being below the age of 18, government action has been called for to create new work opportunities for Emirati nationals, while reducing the dependency on expatriate labour. In the course of this 'Emiratisation' process, the Ministry of Labour has taken action to outline clearly the rights and duties of both foreign and national employees. A new policy requires that the Ministry be notified 30 days in advance to an employer terminating the contract of an Emirati employee.

## Where are the opportunities?

### Accounting and finance

The Emiratisation in the banking and finance sector has been progressing comparatively quickly.

Despite the impact of the 2008/09 financial crisis, the majority of Islamic institutions continue to report profits. Hence, Islamic banking and financing currently receives increased international attention. Work opportunities exist in the fields of accountancy, sales management, funds and asset management as well as in investment analysis.

### Agriculture and fishery

Vegetables, dates, dairy products, poultry and fish products are produced in the United Arab Emirates. The Emirati government offers consultation and training to help farmers increase production and ensure the quality of national agricultural goods and the protection of the environment.

### Construction and property development

After the global financial crisis of 2009 in the UAE, the construction market has decreased, especially in Dubai. However, there are still jobs for urban planners, designers and architects. Civil engineers, project managers, business developers and real estate agents are also sought after.

# **Current career prospects**

## **Culture and heritage, media and creative sector**

Preserving the country's natural and archaeological sites is the declared aim of the UAE government, while its creative industry is rapidly growing. This has increased work opportunities for heritage managers, art historians, archaeologists, researchers, librarians and curators as well as journalists and creative directors.

## **Education**

To execute the government initiative to raise the national education system to the highest level of international competitiveness, the aim is to increase participation of Emirati nationals in education administration, management, research and teaching.

## **Government**

Through the current restructuring process, the individual governmental bodies of the UAE are expected to gain more independence, but at the same time more accountability for their actions. More and more civil services are attainable via an online web portal (e-government). The departments offer in-house training to young Emirati nationals from a broad variety of academic backgrounds.

## **Human resources**

Recruitment and human resources management is expected to play a more important role across all sectors of the UAE labour market, as finding highly skilled personnel is increasingly important to the overall business strategy of a company. The sector offers recruitment opportunities for HR officers, benefits and payroll specialists, HR analysts and consultants.

## **ICT**

The fast growing telecommunications network of the UAE has increased the nationwide demand for IT solutions. Web designers and programmers as well as content developers, consultants and security advisors are currently sought.

# **Current career prospects**

## **Manufacturing**

A broad variety of products are being manufactured in the United Arab Emirates, for both the national and the international market. The UAE mainly produces building substances, aluminium, furniture, and garments. Sales and production managers and traders, accountants, marketing professionals are sought after, as well as maintenance engineers.

## **Oil and gas**

Despite its ongoing diversification process, the economy of the UAE gains a third of its GDP from the oil and gas industry. Engineers, safety managers, researchers as well as project managers, consultants and marketing professionals are likely to find work opportunities.

## **Shipping**

The inauguration of the Dubai Maritime City created and reinforced an environment to service the maritime sector with the import and export of goods, maintenance, repairing and refuelling of ships. The shipping industry offers work opportunities for naval architects, marine and coastal engineers.

## **Tourism and travel**

The low crime rate, well-developed infrastructure, major sports events and exclusive leisure facilities as well as a luxurious shopping environment are attracting greater numbers of visitors to the UAE, increasing by 7.5% each year. In 2007, more than 300,000 people were reportedly employed in the national tourism industry. Work opportunities lie particularly in the fields of marketing, hospitality management, and real estate.

## **Water management and forestry**

The desalination of seawater is of critical importance to the UAE and its agricultural industry. Preventing desertification (the loss of land to the desert) and providing recreation areas and green belts have become priorities on the country's political agenda. This means work opportunities for environmental engineers, hydrologists, agricultural advisors and project managers, and also landscape architects and horticulturists. Opportunities are concentrated in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, however, other Emirates are also setting up extensive environmental programmes.

# Where to find more information

## General information

Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ADCCI)  
PO Box 662, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
Telephone: +97.12.214.000  
[www.abudhabichamber.ae/user/default.aspx](http://www.abudhabichamber.ae/user/default.aspx)

Dubai Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
PO Box 1457, Dubai, United Arab Emirates  
Telephone: +97.14.22.800.00

Economic Department Dubai  
PO Box 13223, Dubai, United Arab Emirates  
Telephone: +97.14.22.99.22

Federation of the United Arab Emirates Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
PO Box 3014, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
Telephone: +97.12.214.144

## 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=tmg\\_jobboards](http://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](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.marketooracle.co.uk/Article1277.html](http://www.marketooracle.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

Country Guides for International Students series updated by Expertise in Labour Mobility,  
Summer 2010

### **Acknowledgements**

This guide was produced with funding from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills under the Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI2), and we are grateful for that support in enabling this project to take place.

The Country Guides for International Students are written by Expertise in Labour Mobility with support from i-graduate. We would like to thank Sharjeel Moutier & Zana Rustemi for providing extensive in-country information.

### **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**

## **NAME**

MOBILE NUMBER,  
EMAIL,  
LANDLINE

## **SKILLS:**

- Ability to work well under pressure – was able to handle the hectic University schedule of examinations & assignments and study for ACCA simultaneously.
- Excellent communication, interpersonal and presentation skills (developed through presenting class assignments and working with colleagues on projects)
- Worked as a team leader in several group assignments.
- Excellent knowledge of MS Office (including Excel), MYOB and good knowledge of MS Access Database.

## **EDUCATION**

- **2002 - 2005 University Of Wollongong in Dubai**
- **Double Major in Bachelor of Commerce specializing in Finance and Management**
- 100% Scholarship in Year 3 at University, Earned a place on the Dean's Merit List at University (UOWD).
- **2002 - Associate Certified Chartered Accountant (ACCA) exams:**
  - Paper 1.1 (Preparing Financial Statements) 75%
- **1993 – 2002 Our Own English High School, Dubai**

**Senior School Certificate (10+2)** – Central Board of Secondary Education, India  
Obtained 87% in the aggregate (top 5% in UAE)

# **Appendix 1 : Sample CV**

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

- **July 2004** - Worked as an audit trainee for a month in the Assurance and Advisory Business Services Division at **Ernst & Young**, Dubai
- **August 2003** - Helped in the audit of Toptronics Trading, Leading Concepts FZE and Emirates Neon FZCO.

## **INTERESTS**

Treasurer of Youth Club

Member of University Volleyball team

## **REFERENCES**

- Dr. Raed Awamleh, Dean Academic Affairs, University of Wollongong in Dubai, Tel: email:
- Dr. Ashraf Mahate, Assistant Professor, University of Wollongong in Dubai. Tel: email