

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

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Country profile

The US economy is rather gloomy at present; the US real gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 6.2% in the fourth quarter of 2008 after declining by 0.5% in the third quarter, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. The sources of the weak economy were:

- A sharp downturn in exports
- A continuing decline in consumer spending
- A larger reduction in business investment
- A continuing decline in housing

Imports, which are a subtraction in the calculation of GDP, also continued to decline. There has been some promise in a slight improvement since this period of financial devastation, and recovery is now underway.

KEY FACTS: The US economy

GDP real growth:	-2.5% (2009 whole year estimate). 2010 is improving on this.
GDP per capita:	US\$46,000(2009)
Labour force:	154 million (2009)
Unemployment rate:	9.5% (2010)
Major sectors of occupation:	Services (79.2%), Industry (19.6%), Agriculture (1.2%)
Main trading partners:	Canada, Mexico, China, Japan, Germany

Despite this, the job market for the Class of 2009 will be more positive than many expected 3 months ago. According to National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) projections, employers have revised their original hiring projections and now expect their college hiring to remain comparable with last year's levels. Many have blamed the US for the domino effect felt during the financial crisis felt throughout the world from 2008. It is said that if it was not for their careless financial domestic policies, especially in housing, that the 'bubble would not have burst' to such an extent.

KEY FACTS: The US graduate labour market

Average age at graduation:	26 years
Average graduate starting salary:	US\$32,000 to 40,000
Average working week:	Monday to Friday, approximately 40 hours a week
Holiday entitlement:	9-20 days annual leave and 10 days public holiday

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.

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.

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 States, 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:

- American Jobs: www.americanjobs.com.
- America's Job bank: www.ajb.dni.us
- Best Jobs USA: www.bestjobsusa.com
- CareerBuilder: www.careerbuilder.com
- Career Magazine: www.careermag.com
- Career Marketplace www.careermarketplace.com
- Careerpath: www.careerpath.com
- CareerSite: www.careersite.com
- Job Bank USA: www.jobbankusa.com
- Monster.com: www.monster.com
- National Association of Colleges and Employers: www.jobweb.org
- NationJob Network: www.nationjob.com
- Wall Street Journal Career Site: www.careers.wsj.com

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
- www.efactor.com
- www.facebook.com
- www.Linkedin.com
- www.myspace.com
- www.plaxo.com
- www.spoke.com
- www.ryze.com
- www.ziggs.com

As a graduate looking for work in the United States, you should use a variety of strategies. Newspapers are a helpful starting point when it comes to the job-hunt.

The Saturday editions are filled with vacancies and most newspapers also have Internet editions. Several newspapers have special employment editions, including The Wall Street Journal which publishes a weekly edition called 'National Business Employment Weekly'. From September to May The Wall Street Journal publishes the Classroom Edition, distributed for free among US-based college students and available to order on the Internet for a small fee.

All (major) regional newspapers have special employment supplements.

Key newspapers to look for:

- International press display: www.pressdisplay.com
- National Business Employment Weekly, Wall Street Journal.
- Wall Street Journal Classroom Edition Newspaper (monthly from September to May)

However, around 70% of job vacancies are not advertised in any newspaper. Therefore, the use of alternative sources, persistency and well developed detection skills will help you to discover the hidden jobs.

Main routes to employment

There are many regional and/or state newspapers in the US. The Top 19 are:

1. USA Today (Arlington, Va.)
2. Wall Street Journal (New York, N.Y.)
3. Times (New York, N.Y.)
4. Times (Los Angeles)
5. Post (Washington, DC)
6. Tribune (Chicago)
7. Daily News (New York, N.Y.)
8. Inquirer (Philadelphia)
9. Post/Rocky Mountain News (Denver)
10. Chronicle (Houston)
11. Post (New York, N.Y.)
12. News/Free Press (Detroit)
13. Morning News (Dallas)
14. Star Tribune (Minneapolis)
15. Globe (Boston)
16. Star-Ledger (Newark, N.J.)
17. Journal-Constitution (Atlanta)
18. Arizona Republic (Phoenix)
19. Newsday (Long Island, N.Y.)

Source: By the largest reported circulation, as reported to the Audit Bureau of Circulation.

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.

Main routes to employment

You may find the following websites useful for locating fairs:

- A list of further education and working fairs: www.idealists.org/gradfairs
- A list of graduate affairs in various locations: www.graduateguide.com/allevnts.asp
- Diversity Job Fair: www.psijobfair.com
- Job EXPO: www.jobexpo.com
- National Career Fairs: www.nationalcareerairs.com
- Techexpo Career Fairs: www.techexpousa.com
- Women For Hire Career expos: www.womenforhire.com/career_expos

Alternative sources of information on jobs and companies:

- USAJOBS, federal government jobs site: www.usajobs.gov
- National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE): www.naceweb.org

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.

It is advisable to register with any employment agency up to one year before the date of your return to the US. Applications for a specific role, however, should be sent no sooner than one month before your scheduled arrival back in the US.

The right skills and competencies

Initiative, communication and analytical skills are, as ever, highly desirable. But nowadays employers expect more from candidates than these skills alone; it is all about integrity, learning agility and strong work ethics.

Main routes to employment

Most wanted:

- A strong work ethic combined with an analytical mind: nowadays many jobs require people to work effectively with data; analysing it, summarising it and extracting key information.
- Communication and teamwork skills: you need to be able to work well within a team.
- Increasingly this requires the ability to work virtually whilst remaining aware of subtle individual and team dynamics that would otherwise be clear when you work face-to-face.
- Flexibility, adaptability and learning agility: you must be able to adapt with resilience to shifting customer or business requirements. You need to be able to learn very quickly and apply new skills on the job.
- Technical skills: in the USA there seems to be a decreasing tolerance for 'on the job' training except at the beginning of a career. So when you apply for a particular job you will usually need to already be proficient already in the skills needed to carry out that job.
- Honesty and integrity: these qualities are of the utmost importance to employers; make sure you are able to showcase them.

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Students responding to NACE's 2008 Graduating Student & Alumni Survey listed their criteria for choosing an employer as follows:

1. Opportunity for advancement
2. Job security
3. Quality of employer's benefit package
4. Friendly co-workers
5. Location of the job

Students responding to the survey made it clear that whilst salaries are important, benefits also matter to them. Overall, students rated medical insurance, yearly salary increases, 401(k) plan, and dental and life insurance as the most important benefits to them.

Main routes to employment

The application letter

Your cover letter is your marketing tool. Whilst studying abroad you may have adapted to a less outspoken culture, do remember when applying for a job in the US, your application is your chance to sell yourself.

A cover letter is usually three paragraphs long. In the first paragraph you should mention the advert or the reason for the application. The second paragraph should be an introduction to your résumé; education and work experience should be mentioned here. In the third paragraph you should conclude your letter with a statement like, "I will follow up with you in a few days to discuss the possibility of an interview. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at" If you state that you will follow up, make sure you do so within three to five business days. Mention your telephone number in the last paragraph and only put your address at the top of the letter. Adding the recruiter's name is considered a plus

Résumé

In the US the term résumé is used instead of CV. A résumé is short, usually one to two pages long. It is a narrative, an advertisement for you as a person, without great emphasis on dates. The résumé begins with personal details, but be aware that you should not mention place or date of birth, gender, civil status, religion or any health details. This is considered private information, on which your professional skills cannot be judged.

It is advisable to write a profile about yourself in short, powerful sentences using strong words paying particular attention to your skills, your specific knowledge and your experiences. Your résumé should present your qualifications, experiences and achievements in a manner that is sharp, focused and insistent.

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 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

In the US, psychological tests are often used alongside interviews during the application process.

Currently the most popular form of testing is psychometric testing where several psychological tests are used to categorise a person's personality. For more information and links to examples of psychometric tests see: www.prospects.ac.uk/psychometric_tests.htm

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 will 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 American graduates:

Major career drivers for American graduates:

1. I want to develop myself.
2. I want to make a difference in the world.
3. I like to be recognized for my achievements.

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

1. Further study in my home country.
2. Employment in my home country.
3. Undecided.

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Current career prospects

Because of the size of the US, the main sectors differ greatly from one state to another. For agriculture, the Midwest (corn and wheat), the states along the Atlantic Ocean (fruit and vegetables), the south and southwest (cotton) and southeast (tobacco) states are important. Industry is traditionally concentrated around the Great Lakes and the northeast coast. The main automobile industry has traditionally been situated in Detroit and Michigan, but during the past decade it has moved to some extent to the south. Much of the creative industry is located in the state of New York. Since the late seventies more and more industries have moved to the south and the west of the country. The construction sector is seen as the barometer of the American economy.

Other important industries are the chemical industry and the airplane industry. The chemical industry is one of the largest contributors to the US GDP. Dow Chemical, Dupont, ExxonMobil, Huntsman Corp., General Electric, BASF, Chevron-Philips, PPG Industries, Equistar Chemicals and Shell Oil are America's top 10 chemical companies.

One of the fastest growing industrial regions in the US is Silicon Valley, where the computer and communication industry is based. California, New York, Ohio and Texas are currently the most important industrial states.

As in most other western countries the service sector has recently increased rapidly in the US. Telecommunication, banking, logistics, consultancy, e-commerce, ICT and dot.com are currently the main growth sectors in the United States.

Where are the opportunities?

Accounting and finance

The credit crunch and sub-prime mortgages in the US triggered a domino effect that has been named as the cause of the global financial crisis. Large financial firms and insurance companies such as Lehman Brothers and American International Group (AIG) went bankrupt and needed a bailout from the government. However, there have been signs of improvement in recent months in terms of economy and jobs in this field. Thus, job opportunities in the fields of financial management, risk management, investment banking, insurance and financial analysis should be created again in the near future.

Current career prospects

Aerospace

The aerospace industry employed 657,700 workers in 2008. The industry is not severely damaged by the financial downturn mainly due to the continuous growth of the civil aircraft and military equipment industry. In early 2009, it was predicted sales in the aerospace industry were \$214 billion, a slight decrease from 2008. Work opportunities lie particularly in civil aircraft infrastructure, space research and development, air transportation systems, satellite based air traffic control system and avionics system engineering. Signs of continued growth are present, and could offer opportunities for those with interest in the field.

Agriculture

The development of ethanol and biodiesel are helping the American agriculture industry to stay competitive in the world market. Nowadays, 230,000 workers are employed by the ethanol industry. The biofuels industry could create nearly 90,000 new jobs in the near future. Biotechnology is the field currently creating the most new work opportunities, as recent pushes towards a greener America have been publicly and globally welcomed.

Chemical manufacturing and pharmaceutical

This industry has been relatively stable during the financial crisis and many of the large companies have managed to stay in profit despite a downturn in general consumerism. The ongoing research and manufacturing of new medicine for uncured diseases, such Alzheimer's disease and cancer, preventative medicine and lifestyle medicine also keeps the industry growing. Work opportunities particularly lie in the field of bioinformatics and nanotechnology.

Current career prospects

Construction

The construction sectors have suffered due to the financial crisis, especially since many believe the crisis to have emerged from the United States and its housing policies. Household projects have dropped by 22% compared to 2008. Although single house construction in February 2009 increased by 22.2%, it is believed that this bounce is short lived. President Obama's new administration has given a stimulus package in order to help the construction sector bounce back from the crisis.

Major transportation construction projects such as Interstate 94 (Milwaukee South to the Illinois border) have been started in order to stimulate the sector. The federal government has put a stimulus package into several projects in order to activate sub-sectors and other projects in the industry, which until now have proven to have been largely successful.

Health and medical care

This is one of the largest industries in the US, generating approximately 3.2 million jobs in the period between 2006 and 2016. Workers are likely to stay in the same field for long periods of time due to highly specialised skills in this sector. Job opportunities are mainly in the field of research and development and medical practitioners.

ICT, computer design and telecommunication

The expansion of wireless Internet, digital communication and databases created a wide range of new markets. Job opportunities exist in programming, computer engineering, system analysis, data communication analysis and information engineering. With some of the large computer firms being located in the US, there is often a place of work available for suitably high-level graduates.

Where to find more information

General information

US Department of State, Washington DC, 20520, USA: www.state.gov

Bureau of Consular Affairs, Washington DC, 20520, USA: www.travel.state.gov

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), 62 Highland Avenue, Bethlehem, PA 18017-9085, USA: www.jobweb.org

Advice & 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

Classroom Edition newspaper, Wall Street Journal, 1155 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036 USA: www.classroomedition.com/cre

101 Best Résumés; Block, J.A, Betrus, M; (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1997), ISBN: -07-032893-5

The \$100,000 Résumé; Rice, R, (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1998) ISBN: 0-07-052586-2

The American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries; Right, J, (Avon Books, New York, annual edition) ISBN: 0-380-78361-4

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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 Résumé

YOUR NAME

460078, HUMMINGBIRD LANE, FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030
PHONE (703) 000-0000 • E-MAIL ME@HOME.COM

OBJECTIVE

[Type Objective Here]

EDUCATION

200x - 200x [School/Organization Name] [City, Province]
[*Diploma/Certificate/Degree/Major*]

- [Details of education completed.]

200x - 200x [School/Organization Name] [City, Province]
[*Diploma/Certificate/Degree/Major*]

- [Details of education completed.]

WORK EXPERIENCE

200x - 200x [Company/Organization Name]
[City, Province]

[*Job Title*]

- [Details of position.]

200x - 200x [Company/Organization Name]
[City, Province]

[*Job Title*]

- [Details of position.]

200x - 200x [Company/Organization Name]
[City, Province]

[*Job Title*]

- [Details of position.]

SKILLS

Add core skills (teamwork, independence) as well as extra skills (computing, presentation).

REFERENCES

References and letters of recommendation available on request.
(make sure that they are!)