You chose to study in the United Kingdom. You have recently graduated, or you are about to take your final exams. Building on an excellent international education you are returning to your home country, the 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 USA, to help you make a successful start in your career in the American labour market. Included are key facts about current trends and jobs in American industry, advice about seeking employment in the USA, hints and tips for making a successful application, and helpful information sources.

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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.

### KEY FACTS: The US economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP real growth 2008:</th>
<th>1.4%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour force:</td>
<td>155.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate:</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major sectors of occupation:</td>
<td>Services (79.2%), Industry (19.6%), Agriculture (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main trading partners:</td>
<td>Canada, Mexico, China, Japan, Germany</td>
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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. Due to the highly volatile financial markets, NACE re-poled employers that had provided college hiring projections in August and in comparison with their actual hires from the Class of 2008, respondents expect to hire about 1.3% more graduates from the Class of 2009.

The decreased expectation for college hiring that occurred between August and October 2008 was broadly felt across industries. Only the government sector saw a significant increase in hiring expectations (an increase of 19.8%), while manufacturing and professional services remained essentially on a level and all other industry categories decreased their hiring projections for the Class of 2009.

### KEY FACTS: The US graduate labour market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average age at graduation:</th>
<th>26 years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average graduate starting salaries:</td>
<td>$30,000 to $47,500 – varies widely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average working week:</td>
<td>Monday to Friday, approximately 40 hours a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday entitlement:</td>
<td>9-20 annual leave and 10 days public holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita:</td>
<td>4th quarter 2008: -6.2 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main routes to employment

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
- Wall Street Journal Classroom Edition Newspaper (monthly from September to May)

**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.

Although a wide variety of jobs are advertised in newspapers or magazines, not all vacancies are advertised in the press. Therefore, the use of alternative sources, persistency and well developed detection skills will help you to discover the hidden jobs.

**ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON JOBS AND COMPANIES:**
- U.S. Department of State International Information Programs: http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa
- 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. Try to attend career fairs, and join professional networks to help you get in touch with valuable contacts.
**Main routes to employment**

**KEY CAREERS FAIRS:**
- Diversity Job Fair: www.psijobfair.com
- Job EXPO: www.jobexpo.com
- National Career Fairs: www.nationalcareerais.com
- Premiere Job Fairs for sales and management professionals: www.premierejobfair.com/calendar
- Techexpo Career Fairs: www.techexpousa.com
- Women For Hire Career expos: www.womenforhire.com/career_expos

The main source for vacancies, information and tips concerning job applications in the US is, of course, the internet. 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.

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.

**KEY VACANCY SITES:**
- American Jobs: www.americanjobs.com High-tech computer and engineering jobs.
- 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 IT, engineering, marketing/sales
- Careerpath: www.careerpath.com Employment listings from major newspapers
- CareerSite: www.careersite.com
- Job Bank USA: www.jobbankusa.com
- Cruel World: www.cruelworld.com MBA-level professionals and software developers
- 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

**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.

**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 upmost importance to employers; make sure you are able to showcase them.

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Main routes to employment

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.

The application letter

Your cover letter is your marketing tool. Whilst studying abroad you may have adapted to a less outspoken culture, but 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.

The curriculum vitae (CV) / 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 CV/résumé attached. Applicants should always remember to use formal language when submitting an online application or applying via email.

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.
Main routes to employment

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?

What makes you tick?

What are the issues that matter most to you if you think about making career progress?

What do you want to get out of life?

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.
©International Student Barometer Autumn 2008

**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.
©International Student Barometer Summer 2008
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, expectations are that at some point the industry will slowly rise and put the crisis to an end. 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.

- **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 will be $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.

- **Agriculture**
  The development of ethanol and biodiesel are helping the American agriculture industry to stay competitive in the world market. Nowadays, 200,000 workers are employed by the ethanol industry. The biofuels industry could create 76,000 new jobs in the near future. Biotechnology is the field currently creating the most new work opportunities.
Current career prospects

- **Automobile**
The big three car manufacturers in the US (Ford, Chrysler LLC and General Motors Corps) are in trouble as a result of the financial crisis in combination with high oil prices. In late 2008, Chrysler LLC and General Motors Corps needed a government bailout in order to avoid bankruptcy. Restructuring is crucial in this sector if the US wants to compete with Japanese car manufacturers. Market trends show some opportunities for the development of small, compact and green cars.

- **Chemical manufacturing and pharmaceutical**
This industry has been relatively stable during the financial crisis. The ongoing research and manufacturing of new medicine for uncured diseases, such Alzheimer’s disease and cancer, preventative medicine and lifestyle medicine keeps the industry growing. Work opportunities particularly lie in the field of bioinformatics and nanotechnology.

- **Construction**
The construction sectors have suffered due to the financial crisis. Household projects have dropped by 17% 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. Federal government has put a stimulus package into several projects in order to activate sub-sectors and other projects in the industry.

- **Health and medical care**
This is one of the largest industries in the US, generating approximately 3 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**
In 2006 the US ICT industry created 1.3 million job opportunities. 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.
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

Books and Articles

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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.