



Guide to Career Exploration and Preparation for International Students

1) Know your visa requirements and how to communicate them with employers

[Center for Global Learning and Engagement \(CGLE\)](#) has information on their webpage about common types of work that may be authorized for students with F-1 and J-1 visas. For F-1 visa students, the two most common types of authorized work are Curricular Practical Training (CPT) while you are still a student and Optional Practical Training (OPT) after you have graduated. For J-1 students it is called Academic Training. [The CGLE](#) offers CPT and OPT information sessions each semester. Staff will help you understand and explore your employment options. They will also assist you with the work authorization application process.

It is important to understand the regulations and requirements for CPT, OPT or Academic Training and how to effectively communicate those regulations and requirements to an employer.

If you are asked any questions regarding your status, respond in a clear and confident manner. The purpose of an interview is to highlight your skills related to the available position; avoid letting the visa

issue dominate your conversation.

2) Explore Career Options

Once you have a thorough understanding of your visa requirements, [schedule a meeting](#) with a UCA Career Services staff member to discuss your interests, skills, and values. This is an important step in exploring career options in your field of study. American employers appreciate candidates who have taken the time to clarify their career goals and who have a sense of how they fit into a certain industry and/or company. This is also a chance for you to explore the unique skill set you have to offer as an international student, such as language skills, intercultural sensitivity, international work or internship experiences and other valuable assets that differentiates you from other students.

You can also take the [Focus 2 Career Planning Assessment](#) that can help you in effectively mapping your career goals. Please visit the [Major and Career Exploration](#) section of our website for more information.

UCA Career Services has created career resources with international students' needs in mind. This guide helps you navigate the intricacies of the U.S. job search, from communicating your visa requirements to negotiating job offers. We hope these tips aid you in preparing for your U.S. job search.



3) Networking

During your career exploration, it is critical that you consider networking as part of your strategy. **Networking** is the process of discovering and utilizing connections between people. These network connections can be formal, informal, or both. For example, networking can be as informal as talking to your family and friends or as formal as attending a [career fair](#) with prospective employers.

Over 80% of jobs are in the “hidden market” and are never posted because they are acquired through networking, personal connections and referrals (NACE, 2009). Your network may include family, friends, faculty, co-workers, former supervisors, fellow UCA students and alumni. They may also be professionals that are currently working in an organization you are interested in and may potentially help you get connected with a hiring manager or send your resume directly to another colleague.

Here are a few places you can get started:

- Register with [Bear Link](#): Connect with UCA alums in your field. You can gain valuable industry information through informational interviews, as well as make connections with UCA alums across the globe.
- **Registered Student Organizations:** Joining student organizations is a great way to meet people and make

connections in your personal and professional interests.

- **Professional Organizations:** Joining organizations in your field or country specific associations will allow you to meet professionals who share similar career interests, gain insight into the professional atmosphere of the industry, and potentially learn about job or internship opportunities abroad.
- **Attend Professional Conferences:** Attending a professional conference in your field of study will maximize your networking potential and is a great venue to learn from other professionals in your industry of interest and make future connections and employment opportunities.
- **Set up Informational Interviews with professionals in your field.** This will allow you to gather career information from people who are already working in occupations, organizations, or geographic locations you are interested in.
- **Join [LinkedIn Groups](#) that reflect your personal and professional interests.** This is a great way to connect with others in your field. Here are a few types of groups that are currently on [LinkedIn](#):
 - Corporate
 - College alumni
 - Nonprofit
 - Trade organizations
 - Conferences
 - Industry-specific



4) US Job Search- Do Your Research

Once you have identified your career goals, the next step is to research the industry and specific company information. This can give you valuable insight into what sectors might be a good fit for you, based on your interests and values.

Here are a few tips that may help in your research:

- Talk with employees and alumni in your industry of interest
- Research U.S. companies with branches in your home country
- Research companies in your home country with branches in the U.S.
- Review annual reports and look for:
 - Company goals and objectives
 - Future plans and strategies
 - Mission statements and core values
 - Review business magazines/newspapers
 - See "9) Resources" for a list of online company search databases

5) Preparing Documents

It is important to keep in mind the difference between a **resume** and a **CV** when applying for a job in the U.S. A **resume** is one page document that showcases your education, relevant work experience, and other activities. It is a concise way to present your qualifications to the employer, while a **CV** is typically a multiple page document only used for academic positions.

You will also want to prepare a **cover letter** explaining your background, personal interest in the position, and why you are a good match for the job.

Here are some tips to make your documents **stand out to U.S. employers**:

- **Highlight** the positives that you bring to the workplace such as your adaptability, ability to handle change in diverse environments, willingness to live and work abroad, cultural awareness, and language proficiency.
- **Do not include** personal information such as date of birth, gender, marital status, religious affiliation, nationality or photos of yourself. U.S. federal law prohibits employers from discriminating against any person on the basis of sex, age, race, national origin, or religion.
- Provide a **frame of reference** for companies/institutes. For example, this could include the size of the company you worked for, or the rank of the institution.
- **Demonstrate strong English writing skills.** [The Center for Writing and Communication](#) at UCA is a great place to have your materials reviewed for structural and grammatical errors.
- **Have your application documents** including resume and cover letters reviewed by a UCA Career Services staff member by [scheduling an appointment](#).



6) Apply for Internships

Internships are experiential learning activities comprised of three-way partnership between students, the university, and an employer.

[The Office of Internships and Cooperative Education](#): connects students with access to internship opportunities, offers career coaching and professional job seeking skill development for all students and alumni

Micro-internships

Another alternative for building your resume is to consider micro-internships. These project-based opportunities range from 5 to 40 hours. Micro-Internships are facilitated via the [Parker Dewey](#) platform, which connects career launchers with companies in need of support. Visit [micro-internships](#) to learn more and to see what opportunities are available to fit your schedule.

7) Being Aware of Cultural Differences

Communication with employers, document format, and interviews in the U.S. may differ greatly from your home country.

Here is a list of general guidelines that may help you navigate cultural and communication differences in the U.S.:

- Review the difference between a resume and a CV. The majority of industry positions require a **resume**.
 - Arrive at least **15 minutes early** for an interview.
 - Speak clearly and confidently

about your unique **attributes and accomplishments, and discuss your strengths, weaknesses and personality.**

- Keep in mind the importance of **eye contact as it displays confidence.**
 - **Know your rights.** Employers are prohibited by U.S. law to ask questions about age, race, sex or marital status.
 - Following up on an interview with a **"thank you" email** shows your enthusiasm and excitement for the position.

8) Interviewing and Negotiating

Once you have secured an interview with an employer (or even before you secure the interview), we recommend that you utilize [Big Interview](#) (an online mock interview platform).

You can practice with general or specific interview questions and receive feedback from a UCA Career Services staff member. Many employers will use a combination of general, behavioral and case questions during your interview. If you receive a job offer, you should review tips on **negotiating**.

Negotiating may seem uncomfortable, but it is a normal aspect of the employment process in the U.S. This may also be the appropriate time to discuss your visa requirements and potential sponsorship by the employer. Again, you should meet with a [Center for Global Learning and Engagement \(CGLE\)](#) staff member about any questions you may have about the hiring process.



9) Resources

Below is a list of online resources and databases that may be helpful for international students in researching career options in the U.S.:

- [Handshake](#) - #1 way college students find jobs. It is a **free** online career hub that gives all students access to job and internship postings, career fair and employer events, employer pages with peer reviews, and more!
- [GoinGlobal](#) - Search for job openings and internship opportunities in countries around the world, Career Guides, and H-1B visa information.
- [Bear Link](#) - Connect with UCA alums in your field. You can gain valuable industry information through informational interviews, as well as make connections with UCA alums across the globe.
- [My Visa Jobs](#) - Search for employers by industry, career, city, job title and review reports on H-1B visa submissions.

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