The SPS Graduate Student Career Checklist was designed to assist you with your career development from the start of your graduate program to your post-degree job search. It is also intended to be a resource you can bring to your SPS Adviser for discussion. Your SPS Adviser can guide you through each stage and answer questions along the way.

**Year 1**

**Professional Development**
- Assess skills you need to develop for potential career paths, ex: MSPA students might want to develop their modeling skills if they want to be an analyst
- Review and follow your timeline for degree completion established by your SPS adviser
- View SPS Webinars on Resume Writing, then **write your resume and update quarterly**
- Create and update your LinkedIn profile
- Meet with SPS Adviser to clarify career goals
- Take on a leadership role relevant to your career interests
- Expand your skills and experience through:
  - Internships, volunteer work, part-time or summer employment
  - Outside of school projects

**Explore Career Options**
- Conduct online research and informational interviews to learn about career paths within your field of study
- Shadow NU alumni through Northwestern Career Advancement’s (NCA) NEXT program to learn more about a specific field and to make contact within your field
- Explore career option in your field of study, you might take an interest inventory to further examine your career interests (see your SPS adviser for details)
- Attend employer information sessions to learn about opportunities, a complete list can be found in CareerCat. CareerCat is NCA’s on-line career management resource (includes job postings, employer information sessions).
  http://www.northwestern.edu/careers/job-intern-prep/resources/careercat/index.html

**Build Your Network**
- Identify mentors who support your career goals and professional development
- Attend networking events or conferences hosted by professional associations and alumni groups
- If you are local, meet and network with current and former graduate students in your department and around campus (LinkedIn can help with this)
- Keep in touch with networking contacts you developed prior to graduate school
- Review SPS Webinar on Networking Skills
- Develop a Networking tracking tool to keep your contacts organized (Excel is an option)
- Attend career fairs in your area to learn about employers who recruit graduate students
Start Job Search process

- Familiarize yourself with hiring cycles for your field of interest
- Meet with your SPS Adviser to create a job search timeline based on hiring cycles and the length of your program
- Examine job descriptions to identify required qualifications to be a competitive applicant
- Register for CareerCat, NCA’s on-line career management resource
- Identify sources of job postings for your field of interest including websites, professional associations, CareerCat
- Develop an elevator speech for use at networking events
- Discuss Interviewing strategies with your SPS Adviser
- Familiarize yourself with resources, including Career Insider (Vault), Wet Feet, and Hoover’s
- Leverage social media to follow employers and make contacts (LinkedIn, Twitter)

Summer

Professional Development

- Conduct an overall audit of your Career Checklist to note progress and gaps
- Reflect on experiences in the first year of your program and how they may have influenced your career direction and interests
- Gain experience relevant to your career goals through volunteer work, internships, part-time employment, taking on new responsibilities at work, outside research, additional classes via MOOCs

Explore Career Options

- Develop a list of desired positions and employers based upon your online research and networking.
- Identify what positions employers are hiring for and the qualifications required

Build Your Network

- Continue suggestions in bold from Year 1
- Use LinkedIn to identify names of alumni contacts at your desired employers
- Attend as many networking events as possible to meet contacts in your field of interest
- Post articles to LinkedIn to be more visible to employers/contacts

Continue Job Search Process

- Continue suggestions in bold from Year 1
- Prepare responses for common interview questions
- Schedule a practice interview with your NCA Adviser
- Draft application materials for the job search (resume, cover letter, etc.) and have them critiqued by your SPS Adviser and your mentors
- Begin process early of identifying at least three potential references who can speak positively about your abilities as a potential employee
- Update your references on your progress and career plans
- Have a clear understanding of how employers within your industry of interest recruit and when
Year 2

Professional Development
__ Continue suggestions in bold from Year 1 and summer
__ Research starting salaries for positions of interest using websites like glassdoor.com, salary.com, & indeed.com
__ Review SPS Webinar to learn strategies for negotiating a job offer

Activate Your Network
__ Continue suggestions in bold from Year 1 and summer
__ Inform your networking contacts about your job search and availability
__ Engage employers or alumni using informational interviewing, your SPS Adviser can provide tips. For example, how to best leverage professional associations

Continue Job Search Process
__ Continue suggestions in bold from Year 1 and summer
__ Develop a sustainable job search routine that you can manage within your busy schedule, including checking websites, researching new employers, networking with new and old contacts, and actively send our resumes/cover letters
__ Tailor resumes and cover letters to the position and employer, ask your SPS Adviser to do a final check
__ Login to CareerCat to review positions posted for NU graduate students
__ Attend career-related events (professional association conferences, career fairs, panels)
__ Attend employer information sessions to market your qualifications to recruiters, see CareerCat for details
__ Meet with your NCA Adviser to conduct a mock interview

Special Considerations

For SPS Distance Learning Master’s Students
Use Career Checklist, but consider the following:
__ Attend SPS Distance Learning Weekend
__ Leverage Skype to connect with your professors, advisers, and professional networking contacts
__ Leverage LinkedIn, NU’s “Our Northwestern”, and local Alumni Clubs (can also use Undergrad Alumni) to indemnify Alumni from companies of interest in lieu of attending on-campus events
__ Make decisions on whether or not you’ll be job seeking outside of your current area

For SPS International Students - Begin these activities Year 1 & continue:
__ Research job search differences between where you are applying and your home country
__ Seek out opportunities to practice and improve your language skills
__ Participate in immersion programs that will allow you to experience the culture where you are applying
__ Develop a job search plan for positions in the country where you are applying to and your home country
__ Use resources like GoingGlobal and Uniworld to identify potential employers
__ Meet with the International Office to learn about the application process for CPT and OPT visas
Develop networking relationships with:
  ___ Contacts from home country who are employed where you are applying
  ___ Former NU international students who found jobs where you are applying
  ___ International companies operating in the country where you are applying
  ___ Contacts from home country who are potential employers
  ___ Your home country consulate