

SPS Undergraduate Career Checklist

The following Career Checklist was developed to assist you in planning your career development over the time you are here at Northwestern (NU). Each stage is anchored by the number of credit hours you've completed and it shows the various career-related items you should be working on during that period. This Career Checklist is oriented toward those students who are completing a career change, advancing with their current employers, and those who are beginning their career journey. ***Finally, your Career Checklist is 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.***

More than 22 Credits to Graduation

During this stage, it is an ideal time to reflect on who you are and where you want your NU experience to take you. Furthermore, you should maximize your NU experience by exploring all the resources available to you.

Professional Development

- ___ Meet with your SPS adviser to learn about career services and resources
- ___ Discuss your career plans with your SPS adviser
- ___ Develop or refine your resume and cover letter. Access SPS resume writing webinars to get you started
- ___ Access CareerCat, Northwestern Career Advancement's (NCA) online career management resource, so you can learn how to use it and upload your resume
<http://www.northwestern.edu/careers/job-intern-prep/resources/careercat/index.html>
- ___ Create your LinkedIn profile. Identify and join relevant NU & SPS LinkedIn groups

Explore Career Options

- ___ Identify post-graduation opportunities aligned with your interests, skills, values, and personality preferences
- ___ Take an interest inventory to examine your career interests (see your SPS adviser for details)
- ___ Consider how courses taken at NU reflect your career interests
- ___ Research industries of interest using resources like Career Insider, Wet Feet, and Hoover's (see your SPS adviser for details)

Build Your Network

- ___ Begin having conversations with professors, personal contacts, and employers regarding your career next steps. Use informational interviewing as a way to gather more industry or employer information. Your SPS adviser can assist you with networking.
- ___ Develop a method for tracking your networking conversations (Excel is a great option)
- ___ Identify mentors who support your career goals and professional development

22 – 12 Credits to Graduation

Now is a great time to narrow down your post-graduation options and move forward in your career decision-making.

Professional Development

- ___ Start formalizing your career plan
 - ___ If you are currently employed, decide if you will remain with your current employer or if you will pursue other options
 - ___ Meet with your SPS adviser to set career goals (where do you see yourself after graduation?)
- ___ Consider an internship to add experience in your field of interest, especially if you are changing careers or if you do not have relevant work experience
- ___ Revisit your resume and cover letter – update with class projects
- ___ Update your LinkedIn profile and post articles for discussion

Explore Career Options

- ___ If you have not yet identified a clear career focus, meet with your SPS adviser to discuss your options
- ___ Start identifying industries and employers of interest by leveraging networking conversations and past research
- ___ 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

Build Your Network

- ___ Identify and join professional associations. Multiple networking opportunities are available to you through conferences, meetings, and LinkedIn. Student memberships are available
- ___ Access SPS webinar on Networking Skills

Start Job Search Process

- ___ Develop your job search plan for your final quarters/units at Northwestern
 - ___ Meet with your SPS adviser to learn about recruiting strategies for employers from your industry of interest
 - ___ Establish your job search timeline based on your chosen industry
 - ___ Identify events to attend to gather information or networking contacts
 - ___ Integrate your networking plan into this overall job search plan
- ___ Craft a sustainable job search routine that you can manage with your busy schedule, including checking websites, researching new employers, networking with new and old contacts, and actively sending out resumes/cover letters
- ___ Expand your knowledge of job opportunities and work settings, and prepare for interviewing by networking with employers in your field

Less than 12 Credits to Graduation

Make decisions about post-graduation opportunities and implement your intentional career search strategy.

Professional Development

- ___ Update your resume in CareerCat, incorporating professional skills and accomplishments
- ___ Update and tailor your LinkedIn profile (include career goal-specific headline and content throughout), adding new personal contacts, and join groups and follow companies related to your career goals.
- ___ Access SPS Webinar to learn strategies on negotiating a job offer

Explore Your Career Options

- ___ Decide if you want to attend graduate/professional school immediately or take time off in between. If applicable, complete and submit graduate/professional school application materials at least 1 month prior to deadline (personal statement, transcripts, entrance exam scores, recommendations).

Activate Your Network

- ___ Supplement your online research by conducting informational interviews with personal contacts, NU alumni, and industry experts who work for employers of interest.
- ___ Attend events, especially professional networking events (conferences/conventions), and on-campus employer information sessions offered by NCA (see CareerCat for details)

Continue Job Search Process

- ___ Extensively research specific careers, industries, and targeted employers using WetFeet, Vault, Hoover's, LinkedIn, and company websites.
- ___ Learn strategies for identifying contacts who work for specific employers (such as using the LinkedIn alumni tool) and polish your professional communication skills by meeting with your SPS adviser
- ___ Select 2-3 industries and related employers to pursue for full-time employment and learn/implement the best job search techniques for those industries
- ___ Activate your sustainable job search routine; be sure to include checking websites, researching new employers, networking with new and old contacts, and actively sending your resumes/cover letters
- ___ Apply for full-time positions as early as possible
- ___ Tailor your resumes and cover letters to each job opportunity and employer
- ___ Strengthen your interviewing skills by conducting a mock interview with an NCA Adviser
- ___ Identify potential references and obtain permission to use their information in your applications for full-time employment or graduate programs