The SPS Graduate Student Career Checklist was designed to assist 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.

**Year 1:**

**Professional Development**

- Assess skills you need to develop for potential career paths, ex: MSDS 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: Resume Fundamentals and Advanced Resume Writing Strategies, then write your resume and update quarterly.
- Create and update your LinkedIn profile.
- Meet with your 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 the NEXT program to learn more about a specific field and to make contacts within your field.
- Explore career options in your field of study, you might take an interest inventory to further examine your career interests. Check out the Northwestern Career Advancement (NCA) webpage for resources.
- Develop a list of desired positions and employers based on your online research and networking.
- Identify what positions employers are hiring for and the qualifications required.

**Build Your Network**

- Identify mentors who support your career goals and professional development.
- Create a Northwestern Network Mentorship Program profile to connect with alumni and develop mentoring relationships.
- Attend networking events or conferences hosted by professional associations and alumni groups.
- Keep in touch with networking contacts you developed prior to graduate school.
- View SPS Webinar: The Networking Advantage
- 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.
- Use LinkedIn to identify names of alumni contacts at your desired employers.
- Post articles to LinkedIn to be more visible to employers and contacts.

**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 the length of your program.
- Examine job descriptions to identify required qualifications to be a competitive applicant.
- Register for Handshake, NCA’s online career management resource.
- Identify sources of job postings for your field of interest including websites, professional associations and Handshake.
- Develop an elevator speech for use at networking events.
- View SPS Webinar: Interviewing
- Discuss interviewing strategies with your NCA Adviser.
- Familiarize yourself with Northwestern career resources, including Career Insider (Vault), Wet Feet, and Hoover’s.
- Leverage social media to follow employers and make contacts (LinkedIn, Twitter).

**Year 2:**

### Professional Development

- Continue suggestions in **bold** from Year 1.
- 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, and additional classes via MOOCs.
- Research starting salaries for positions of interest using websites like glassdoor.com, salary.com, and indeed.com.
- View SPS Webinar: Negotiating

### 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 **NCA Adviser** can provide tips.
  For example, how to best leverage professional associations.

### Continue Job Search Process

- Continue suggestions in **bold** from Year 1.
- Draft application materials for the job search (resume, cover letter, etc.) and have them critiqued by your **NCA Adviser** and your mentors.
- Begin the process 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.
- 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 out resumes/cover letters.
- View SPS Webinar: **Cover Letters**
- Tailor resumes and cover letters to the position and employer, ask your **NCA Adviser** to do a final check.
- Login to **Handshake** to review positions posted for NU graduate students.
Attend career-related events (professional association conferences, career fairs, panels).
Prepare responses for common interview questions.
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 Symposium for Online Programs.
- Utilize Skype to connect with your professors, classmates, and professional networking contacts.
- Leverage LinkedIn and Regional Alumni Clubs to identify 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:

- 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 career 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 your home country who are potential employers
  - Your home country consulate