

SPS Undergraduate Career Checklist

The following SPS Undergraduate Career Checklist was developed to assist you in planning your career development over the time you are here at Northwestern University (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.

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 career plans with your [SPS Adviser](#).
- Develop or refine your resume and cover letter.
 - View SPS Webinars: [Resume Fundamentals](#) and [Advanced Resume Writing Strategies](#)
 - View SPS Webinar: [Cover Letters](#)
- Register for [Handshake](#), the Northwestern Career Advancement (NCA) on-line career management resource.
- Create and update your [LinkedIn](#) profile. Identify and join relevant industry, Northwestern University and SPS LinkedIn groups.

Exploring Your Career Options

- Identify post-graduation opportunities aligned with your interests, skills, values, and personality preferences.
- Take an interest inventory to examine your career interests. Check out [NCA's webpage](#) for resources.
- Consider how courses taken at NU reflect your career interests.
- Research industries of interest using [Northwestern career resources](#) such as Career Insider (Vault), Wet Feet and Hoover's.

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.
- Develop a method for tracking your networking conversations (Excel is a great option).
- 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.

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 Your Career Options

- If you have not yet identified a clear career focus, meet with your [SPS Adviser](#) or [NCA Adviser](#) to discuss your options.
- Start identifying industries and employers of interest by leveraging networking conversations and past research.
- Shadow NU alumni through the [NEXT program](#) to learn more about a specific field and to make contacts 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.
- View SPS Webinar: [The Networking Advantage](#)

Start Job Search Process

- Develop your job search plan for your final quarters/units at Northwestern.
 - Meet with your [NCA 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 [Handshake](#), 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.
- View SPS Webinar: [Negotiating](#)

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 [Handshake](#) 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 and polish your professional communication skills by meeting with your [NCA 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.
- Login to [Handshake](#) to review positions posted for NU undergraduate students.
- Apply for full-time positions as early as possible.
- Tailor your resumes and cover letters to each job opportunity and employer, ask your [NCA Adviser](#) to do a final check.
- View SPS Webinar: [Interviewing](#)
- Strengthen your interviewing skills by conducting a mock interview with your [NCA Adviser](#).
- Identify potential references and obtain permission to use their information in your applications for full-time employment or graduate programs.