Starting your career in Hong Kong
Country Guide for International Students

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You chose to study in the United Kingdom. You are beginning to think about what your options are after graduation. Building on an excellent international education you are returning to your home country, Hong Kong. You stand at the beginning of an exciting career, but what are the steps you need to take in order to find a suitable job, and where do you find the information you need?

This careers profile provides you with practical advice about returning to work in Hong Kong to help you make a successful start in your career in the Hong Kong labour market. Included are key facts about current trends and jobs in Hong Kong industry, advice about seeking employment in Hong Kong, hints and tips for making a successful application, and helpful information sources.

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Country profile

Due to its focus upon a free economic system, Hong Kong has been prosperous whilst maintaining stability, and its industry and economy have grown in the last ten years, especially in the services sector. Focusing on a free market in trade, investment and finance, the Hong Kong market has managed to remain strong and has been named the world's freest economy many times. With the return of Hong Kong from British to Chinese rule, links to mainland China have strengthened, resulting in increased trade with the Chinese. This may not bode well for expatriates in Hong Kong however, since there is a likelihood of preference for natives over international workers due to the increasing use of Cantonese as the business language.

The construction sector, and to a lesser extent the manufacturing sector, have been other important factors in Hong Kong's burgeoning economic success, with a steadily increasing labour force and employment rate to match. Furthermore, recent legislation has been introduced at government level in order to improve labour conditions; this will assist the Hong Kong government in their search for skilled workers and workers with international experience.

The GDP per capita is reasonably strong, and has also seen an upward trend in recent years. Despite this, the overall expenditure in investment has dropped in real terms, as has private consumption. However, such an outcome must be expected with the recent general global economic downturn, which like other nations, Hong Kong did not escape.

KEY FACTS: The Hong Kong economy

GDP per capita:	US$43,680 (2010 est.)
Labour force:	3.65 million (2010)
Unemployment rate:	5% (2010)
Major sectors of occupation:	Services (89%), Industry (9%), other (2%) (2009)
Main trading partners:	Mainland China, British Virgin Islands, United Kingdom, United States

Country profile

Hong Kong's workforce is now predominantly service-based after moving away from the manufacturing industry which had dominated its labour market in recent years. Opportunities for recent graduates are open in many sectors and the number of large companies taking in graduates is promising for a returning student. Despite poor economic conditions worldwide, businesses in Hong Kong were right to be optimistic about the upward turn in economic fortunes.

KEY FACTS: The Hong Kong graduate labour market

Average age at graduation:	22-23 for bachelor degrees.
Average graduate starting salary:	Depending on sector at least US$1,300 per month.
Average working week:	Monday-Friday, 9am-6pm (occasional half-Saturdays may be expected).
Holiday entitlement:	Annual leave varies but the government sets a legal minimum of 7 days statutory holidays per annum. Around 2 weeks is more commonly found inclusive of these governmental requirements.

Benefits

Benefits of a UK qualification

Possibly the largest benefit which all international students receive when studying at one of the over 100 universities in the UK, is the fact that UK universities have some of the most renowned and prestigious histories of higher education in the world. Even if a graduate does not study at one of the more famous institutions, the graduate can return to their home country safe in the knowledge that no matter where they look for work, their qualifications will be highly respected. This is also useful in job interview situations, in which your study in the UK can come into conversation as a point of interest and as an example of experience in situations of teamwork, cultural awareness, when possibly you were outside of your comfort zone.

Furthermore, your experiences in writing and reading English are extremely valuable in the job market. As an added benefit, you will no doubt have been exposed to a variety of accents and dialects during your study stay, making you more open to the English language than you may have realised.

Graduating: Searching for work

Not long ago, student life and job finding was a far simpler procedure. Graduates would simply leave university, either looking for work through friends and family, a large company or a local business, and often step into a full-time job after an interview. These days, a wider variety of options exist which match the wider variety of jobs and the ease of travel which is available to the worldly student. As the number of students increases, so does the quality of the competition.

It's tough out there. Many graduates having just left university know this, whilst others are soon to find out. Since so many new university leavers have a career path in mind which they may have had for many years, the competition is fierce in many of the desirable graduate schemes. This is more the case in the UK then almost anywhere else. However, one benefit which you as an international student have is that you have a home country to which you can return. The lack of vacancies in the UK has led to many British students leaving for work further afield, often with little experience of the language in that country outside of the native English speaking countries. For example, in China whilst there are some international companies which accept English-only students, the vast majority will prefer a candidate with some basic Chinese. If you are returning to your home country with a firm grasp of English as well as your mother tongue, you already have an advantage.

It can be difficult to come across vacancies in graduate jobs, full-time occupation is hard to find without experience and most find that internships can involve heavy competition. All is not lost however! Most graduates find that the main issue is simply knowing where to look, and this guide hopes to point you in the right direction.

Check out the **'More Information'** section to see handy links with tips and advice in the search for work.

Main routes to employment

Getting started

Online recruitment and vacancy websites:

- JobFinder: www.jobfinder.com.hk Website for jobseekers
- Job Market: www.jobmarket.com.hk Large job database website
- Jobsdb: www.jobsdb.com/hk International job database
- Jump: www.jump.mingpao.com Job website
- Recruit Online: www.recruitonline.com Hong Kong job search
- Recruitment websites: www.recruit.com.hk & www.hongkong.recruit.net

Social networking

Social networking has become an increasingly common and important part of seeking work, especially with the social media generation. Sites such as Facebook.com and LinkedIn.com have flourished into everyday use for graduates and employers alike, in order to find the right person for the job. Graduates looking for work in their home nation may already be aware of the value of such sites, and may be aware of specific sites which are specialised in their own country. Graduates can place details of themselves including their job experience, education level, home/current university as well as a photo if preferred. On some of these sights they can also search for jobs according to their specific interest or area of study. What is clear is that graduates should certainly take the time to discover the potential job opportunities which these sites offer, both socially and at a socio-professional level.

The following list of examples is not exhaustive, and contains websites with varying emphasis on professionalism and social networking.

Sites worth checking out (global):

- www.ecademy.com
- www.efactor.com
- www.facebook.com
- www.linkedIn.com
- www.myspace.com
- www.plaxo.com
- www.ryze.com
- www.spoke.com
- www.ziggs.com

Main routes to employment

In Hong Kong, there are several newspaper publications which may prove useful when looking for work.

Some of these publications offer Saturday or Thursday supplements which specialise in recruitment and job vacancies. Numerous government initiatives have been created to assist individuals in finding work, especially to attract those coming from or returning from foreign countries.

Key newspapers to look for:

- Asian Wall Street Journal: www.wsj-asia.com
- Far Eastern Economic Review: www.feer.com
- Hong Kong Commercial Daily: www.hkcd.com.hk
- HK magazine: www.hk-magazine.com
- South China Morning Post: www.scmp.com
- The Standard: www.thestandard.com.hk

All of these publications offer an insight to some degree of potential openings and job availability in Hong Kong.

Graduate jobs/Careers Fairs

An interesting way of finding work or further education is through graduate fairs. With varying focuses in each event, graduates can find themselves coming face to face with companies of interest, and may even find interest in something which was not previously considered. Graduate fairs are also a good opportunity to find out about graduate schemes being offered by companies and what these entail.

Many fairs offer other facilities such as CV workshops, letter writing tuition and a chance to network with individuals representing companies of differing sizes and reputations, thus they can offer a good learning opportunity even if you struggle to find a company suited to you. Many universities in the UK hold their own fairs near the end of the spring/summer term and throughout the summer, so it is well worth getting involved and putting yourself out there. There may also be fairs in your home country, whether a national event or a university which is local to you, so keep your eyes and ears open. www.lifelonglearning.org.my/post-graduate-education-fair is a successful graduate fair in Hong Kong.

Main routes to employment

Alternative sources of information on jobs and companies:

- Career Jet: www.careerjet.hk Useful website, containing over 40,000 published jobs which can be searched under headings such as industry and location.
- Career Times: www.careertimes.com.hk A branch of the newspaper Hong Kong Economic Daily.
- GovHK: www.gov.hk Site is dedicated to providing information on job availability, recruitment, registrations and licensing, government incentives and labour legislation. This is a reliable site for general information concerning work.
- Job Access: www.jobaccess.com Leading website on recruitment and job vacancies.

Hong Kong places great emphasis on the creation and maintenance of links and networks with other individuals. Trying to be professionally detached can prove problematic in creating positive networks. When searching the Internet for job offers and vacancies, it is advisable to bookmark web pages and re-visit them regularly. Make use of email alert services offered by online resources to stay updated with the newest jobs.

It is advisable to register with an employment agency up to one year before the date of your return to Hong Kong. Applications for a specific role, however, should be sent no sooner than one month before your scheduled return to your native country.

Another strategy that has proven successful for some applicants is to approach employers directly and send open applications to companies that you are interested in working for. An open application is an application that does not respond to a particular vacancy, and in some cases submitting an open application indicates a degree of creativity and your willingness to take initiative.

The right skills and competencies

The skills and competencies required in Hong Kong are often of a very high standard, due to the competitive nature of the marketplace and the high level of candidates looking for work. Hong Kong is a bustling and concentrated business hub and as a result, looks for the best in its business dealings and personnel alike. It is becoming increasingly advantageous to speak Cantonese and Mandarin in Hong Kong, such is the increasing importance of these languages internationally. It is becoming more difficult for international graduates to find work in Hong Kong, since dealings with mainland China have been increasing rapidly. This means that experience with Cantonese is becoming increasingly important for many jobs, which of course bodes well for graduates returning to Hong Kong.

Main routes to employment

Most wanted:

- A strong understanding of company traditions, ethic and aims.
- A positive attitude.
- Strong presentation (attire and communication).
- The requisite skills for the job.
- Time management and organisational skills.

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The application letter

A letter of application should attract the recruiter's attention. It should make the potential employer want to look at your application in more detail, read your CV and hopefully invite you for an interview.

Precision, a positive attitude and honesty are the keywords when writing your application letter. Your letter should explain your motivation for applying and portray the competencies and skills you have gained during your studies, previous work experience or elsewhere. Try to give concrete examples and avoid empty phrases. Above all, highlight why you are suitable for the job and why the job suits your individual talents and attitude. It is also sensible to state your level of English or other international languages at this stage as well as your mother tongue.

The curriculum vitae (CV) / résumé

The CV or résumé is a tool which you can use to secure an interview with the employer; it is a way of marketing yourself in other words. It should not be more than three pages long, and should usually be in reverse chronological order, with your most recent experiences and education/ employment at the beginning. If you wish to write this in Cantonese, remember that in Hong Kong the usual method of written language is traditional Chinese symbols, rather than the simplified version often used elsewhere. Your CV/résumé should list your personal details, education and employment history, relevant skills, qualifications, and extracurricular activities. With regard to personal information, your name, date of birth, gender, marital status and number of children (if any) can be provided as well as contact details such as telephone, email and mobile phone details. The subject of referees is usually kept until the end of the document, stating that referees are available on request. Make sure you can back this up with actual referees, as networks and connections are important in Hong Kong business and if the offer of referees is found to be hollow it could prove extremely damaging to your likelihood of employment.

Main routes to employment

Digital applications

Digital application forms are becoming increasingly common in Hong Kong. The Internet is considered a fast medium of communication but completing an application form online requires the utmost attention – always check your submission before pressing send. If you are making your application via email, write a concise application email with your CV/ résumé attached. Applicants should always remember to use formal language when submitting an online application or applying via email.

The job interview

Throughout the application procedure it is essential to make a good impression. Never lie or bend the truth during your interview, and avoid being pushy or showy. During the interview, appear interested and enthusiastic and try to stay calm even if you are feeling nervous. Mention any personal acquaintances or connections you have with the company. Be polite and punctual but do not be afraid to check the meaning of questions and clarify points before responding. Be aware that nowadays psychometric tests are often used. For more information and links to examples of psychometric tests see:

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/psychometric_tests.htm

Some employers set entrance tests to enable them to judge more clearly each candidate's suitability for the job. These will mostly test general abilities, aptitudes and interests related to the job in question. At times, employers might conduct group interviews. You should therefore enquire about the structure and process of the interview in advance.

Preparing for the interview:

- Try to find out information about the company you are applying to work for. This highlights that you are prepared and are thorough in your approach to work.
- Think in advance about questions that might be asked and prepare some possible responses.
- Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses and be honest about them, do not lie about or exaggerate your abilities. It is also useful to prepare answers which show how you are improving your weaknesses.
- Be aware of situations in which you have dealt with problems so that you can provide examples to the interviewer of how you can handle such situations.
- Prepare questions to ask about aspects such as responsibilities, colleagues and other 'ins and outs' of the business.
- You may wish to exchange business cards (using two hands) at the beginning of the interview. If you are looking for a job with international prospects you can do this with details printed in English and Cantonese on opposing sides.

Where will your career take you?

Research from the i-graduate International Student Barometer study tells us the following about the main career drivers for Hong Kong graduates:

Major career drivers for Hong Kong graduates:

1. I want to develop myself.
2. I like to be recognised for my achievements.
3. Future job security is important to me.

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Top 3 future plans of Hong Kong about to graduate from UK HE Institutions:

1. I am still undecided.
2. Employment in Hong Kong.
3. Short term employment in the UK.

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Current career prospects

There are indications that in Hong Kong there are sectors with a demand for highly skilled labour, offering plenty of job opportunities. However, due to increased levels of training the overall standard of graduates is always improving, meaning that there will be greater competition for the positions. The current global economic crisis has caused the number of applications for online job advertisements to greatly increase, while at the same time fewer job advertisements have been published nationwide and beyond seasonal adjustments of labour demand.

Due to its free economy and low levels of taxation, Hong Kong attracts many serious professionals, expatriates and graduates alike. Due to this, the numbers of people seeking work in Hong Kong in many sectors is ever-increasing. Despite the economic downturn, expectations for Hong Kong's economy are still optimistic. Expansion is expected to occur in financial services, particularly accounting and investment management trusts.

Where are the opportunities?

Accounting and finance

Due to ties with China, the need for both new and experienced accountants is ever-present. The CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Agreement) with China has secured existing ties and may offer exciting new prospects for accountants in the region. Many large accountancy firms operate graduate training schemes with recruitment periods usually between Spring and Autumn, although some companies may begin this process earlier in the year. Be aware that there may be several rounds of tests before you are offered a job.

Advanced manufacturing

In recent years there has been a shortage of skilled workers in the high-tech manufacturing industry in Hong Kong, so this could potentially come as a source of employment for those returning to start a career following graduation. This sector grew rapidly from the mid 1990s and as a result now makes up a substantial proportion of the total workforce of Hong Kong. A graduate with a suitable degree could look to step in at junior management level or in a traineeship.

Current career prospects

Architecture, planning and construction

Hong Kong is widely known for its towering and fantastically designed buildings which make up its famous city skyline. Therefore it comes as no surprise to learn that the architectural industry has been steady. It focuses usually on contemporary design and attracts some of the very best architects from around the world. There is not only opportunity for such grand designs; much of Hong Kong's architecture is based upon space saving and large-scale city planning, so a variety of opportunities may be available. All architects must register with the Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA). Exporting architects to the regions of China and the Middle East has been important in recent years and may prove to be an exciting prospect for those looking to work in this field. The Hong Kong Government has also been looking into substantial investment in localised infrastructure.

Biotechnology

Hong Kong's research, technology and development methods have catapulted it from being somewhat lacklustre in biotechnology to a true world contender in recent years. With around 300 biotechnology companies in Hong Kong, the steadily growing industry is healthy and shows signs of increasing importance. The companies which exist in Hong Kong mainly consist of healthcare/pharmaceutical companies as well as some which focus more on medicinal devices. This prosperity is backed by the willingness of foreign companies to set up branches of their companies in Hong Kong, particularly for focus upon the Eastern market.

Engineering

There are opportunities available to those seeking jobs involving engineering in Hong Kong; however most will require some level of experience and a university degree in engineering. Other skills may be required of course, depending on which position you apply for. It is important to be a member of the Hong Kong Institute of Engineers (HKIE), as many see membership of this organisation as key to being regarded as a professional in the area.

Current career prospects

Health and medical care

Healthcare in Hong Kong like other industries is expanding and seeks new skilled workers. It offers prospects for those with the relevant qualifications who are seeking challenges and the opportunity to further their career in this sector. As an area of growth in Hong Kong, graduates could find healthcare an exciting sector in which to develop their career.

ICT and e-commerce

The ICT industry in Hong Kong is expanding at a rapid pace. Due to this, there is work available for the experienced ICT professional and recent graduate alike. Again, standards are high and one cannot expect an easy path into a job, however if the relevant qualifications are present then with some experience an individual can go far. Hong Kong is a trailblazer in the ICT field and offers potential for an exciting career.

Where to find more information

General information

www.astri.org/en/company.php Applied Science and Technology Research Institute Company Limited

www.archsd.gov.hk Architectural Services Department

www.csb.gov.hk Civil Service Bureau

www.cedb.gov.hk/ctb Communications and Technology Branch Commerce and Economic Development Bureau

www.dh.gov.hk Department of Health

www.fstb.gov.hk Financial Services Branch

www.gov.hk Hong Kong Governmental information & services

www.hkcic.org Hong Kong Construction Council

www.hkhs.com Hong Kong Housing Society

Advice and tips on Careers Fairs, CVs and general job seeking

www.articlealley.com/article_1547972_36.html - An article for those in the nursing profession.

www.collegegrad.com/articles/dont-give-up.shtml - An article on staying positive throughout the work search process

www.employmentblawg.com/2010/job-seeking-tips-for-college-graduates - Further tips in the competitive field of employment seeking graduates

www.fpef.org/Education/Tips.htm - Some good tips on networking

www.thegraduate.co.uk/static_generic.cgi?a=tmg_jobboards – Link with good information for those still considering staying in the UK after study

www.graduateopportunities.com/career_advice/graduates_with_disability - A link providing useful tips and stats for graduates with a disability

www.londongradfair.co.uk/autumn - The Guardian's annual job fair for graduates. It is located in London.

www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article1277.html - Tips on how to work out your finances post-study.

www.online-graduate.co.uk/tipsforgrads.html - Further tips for graduates seeking work experience.

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/international_students.htm - Information for international students

Where to find more information

Books and Articles

www.justlanded.com/english/Hong-Kong/Hong-Kong-Guide/Jobs/Looking-for-a-job-in-Hong-Kong Looking for a Job in Hong Kong

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Disclaimer

Whilst all efforts have been made to ensure the information in this Country Guide is correct at the time of writing, readers are advised that procedures and information sources may change regularly.

Appendix 1 : Sample CV/Résumé

Mary Wang (王小雯)
Address: 2 /F Team Building, 3 General Road, Hong Kong
Phone (Office): 23458789 (mobile): 98772432
Email Address: xxx@xxx.com.hk

Career Objective

To further develop a good career in the Public Relations Industry

Education

2004 – 2007 Hong Kong Baptist University, Bachelor of Social Sciences in Communication (specialisation in Public Relations and Advertising)

Working Experience

October 2007 to Present

Public Relations Officer, XYZ Public Relations Co Ltd.

- Plan, organise and manage PR events, campaigns and activities
- Write/translate press releases and other promotional materials
- Develop relationship with the press

May to September 2006

Public Relations Assistant (Internship), ABA International Co Ltd.

- Liaise with production house and advertising agencies on TVC production
- Liaise with vendors to provide technical support to clients

Extra-curricular Activities

2006 Chairman of Society of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University

Professional Qualifications

2006 Member of Professional Marketing Association, Hong Kong

Skills

MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint

Languages

English (spoken and written), Cantonese, Putonghua

Reference

Available upon request

Availability

One month's notice

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