Career Resources for International Students

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UQ CAREERS SERVICE
Part of the UQ Student Employability Centre
If you are seeking employment or experience opportunities for the first time in Australia, you may have already noticed some of the significant differences in employer expectations and job searching compared to your home country.

Discovering these differences and implementing them into your Australian job search techniques will significantly enhance your opportunities for success.

1. **Discover what employer expectations are**

   In order to be a competitive candidate, employers look for applicants who:

   1. Meet eligibility requirements (VISA, GPA, Degree, Skills and Attributes).
   2. Have the technical skills and capability to competently undertake the advertised job tasks.
   3. Have the potential to be moved into different roles including more senior positions.

   In addition, recruiters are looking for candidates with the following:

   4. Confidence as a person and confidence in their unique skills/attributes.
   5. Recognition of other people’s skills and how teams function successfully.
   6. Well-developed interpersonal skills with the ability to form relationships.
   7. Excellent communication skills to promote and transfer their expertise.
   8. A genuine interest in the role or industry being applied for with a sound understanding of industry needs.
   9. History of personal/professional development aided by exposure to challenging situations.
   10. Graduate professional skills such as problem solving, critical analysis, time management & ability to work autonomously.
   11. Mature work ethic, positive attitude, motivated, flexible, approachable, adaptable to change and leadership skills.

2. **Understand the Australian workplace culture**

   All regions across the globe have developed their own national cultures as well as workplace culture. How you present your values in a job; the manner in which you engage with colleagues and senior staff members within an organisation; in addition to the unwritten rules that exist in the business; take on a different context depending upon which country you are living in and the position you hold within the company hierarchy.

   In western workplace cultures, particular in Australia, employers expect all new employees to observe the company culture and alter their own style to ‘fit in’. This by no means requires an individual to change their total personality, but perhaps change their style. For example, it may require presenting ideas to a manager in a different way than you did in a previous role.

   **Australian workplace characteristics of staff**

   1. As an equality-based society, superiors are accessible. Information is shared frequently to staff of all levels.
   2. Employees are expected to be self-reliant, work independently (under limited supervision) and display initiative; hiring and promotions decisions are based on evidence of what one has done or can do, not just qualifications.
   3. Communication is upfront with direct questions to both colleagues and supervisors. Being proactive and assertive is considered constructive.
3 Develop essential skills, attributes and experiences in Australia

1. Australian employers value eye contact, a friendly attitude and the ability to move from a polite conversation, ‘small talk,’ to an engaging discussion about industry or the business. Practicing your conversation skills during professional networking events as a student will be beneficial.
2. Your ideas and skills are highly valuable, even as a new employee. If you have ideas, observe staff that are regarded well and adopt similar techniques. When raising ideas and suggestions initially, it may be helpful to ask if something similar has been proposed or has previously been in place. This will give you extra background and identify you as a team player with initiative.
3. Make the effort to speak up! Especially during meetings, it is essential that you offer your viewpoint or at least ask questions. In most cases you will not be expected to be a silent observer. If you are unsure of what your level of participation should be during a meeting, speak to your supervisor beforehand and get some tips for possible questions to ask and information to gather.

4 Navigate Australian employment opportunities

1. There are a large variety of work types in Australia, advertised at different times and locations online. Refer to the job searching fact sheet for in-depth details and instructions.
2. Online and in person networking is essential to develop and maintain professional networks. These connections may be beneficial immediately or in your future profession.
3. Employers have high expectations that applicants are genuine and have a sound understanding of the company and industry they are apply for. Ensure you research thoroughly and use information you find in your application.
4. Applications for Australian students opportunities are generally online and for an internship or graduate program require a 1 page cover letter, a 2 page Resume and a selection criteria/online responses.

5 Improve your employability in Australia

The information previously discussed in this guide should have given you a good insight into the different expectations employers in Australia may have of you when compared to your home country. If you would like to increase your employability prospects, follow the guidelines below.

1. Employers have high expectations of your English language skills – mostly your colloquial English. Your IELTS score may be relevant for some applications, however most employers will be gauging your English language skills through:
   - Your cover letter, resume and selection criteria.
   - Your understanding of what content was required in your applications.
   - Networking events, including Career Fair.
   - Interviews, including video interviews.

Improve your English skills through expanding your social circle - join clubs and societies, undertake casual employment and volunteering, read books and watch movies in English.

2. Research what type of skills and experiences are expected by future employers. Do you already have these skills? Which skills or experiences are you lacking? Where can you gain these?
   - Look at positions you may be interested in online for more information.

3. Do you have the application skills for the country you are interested in applying to?
   - If you are seeking experience in Australia, please attend the UQ Career Services Resume, Job searching, Networking and Interview Skills workshops. You are also welcome to book an appointment to discuss a career enquiry, resume review or mock interview.
   - Will you also be looking at employment options at home or in a different region? GoinGlobal is an amazing resource which has employment information for 160 cities. Visit the UQ Student Employability website (employability.uq.edu.au) for more information.
4. Common skill development for Australians

Many Australians commence working and volunteering at a young age, around 15 years old, developing basic employability skills which can also be gained by you while studying your Degree.

- Participate in a variety of volunteering opportunities; several one day activities and 1-2 longer term ones requiring strong contribution and not just attendance is important.
- Casual employment, where you are required to speak English, will develop your language and interpersonal skills, teamwork, initiative, as well as prove you can be responsible, trustworthy and are worth hiring! More importantly, the situations that occur while working in casual employment are often excellent examples and evidence of your skills in applications and interviews. Book an appointment with the UQ Student Union for casual job searching assistance?

- Internships: There are a variety of different internships available and most are open to international students. Many students complete a non-paid internship with a not-for-profit organisation prior to being successful in gaining a coveted paid internship.
- Part time industry employment can be extremely difficult to secure but is a wonderful stepping stone to full time work in your industry.

5. Referees

It is essential that you make an effort to acquire professional or character referees who are based in Australia. Although you can list referees from any country, Australian employers tend to prefer to call a referee who is based in Australia. Australian employers do not generally accept written references as we prefer to ask a set of questions which relate specifically to the position and company. In large government organisations, your referee may be emailed the questions for record keeping instead of a phone call.

- Referees are asked similar questions that you answered in your interview.
- Referees are asked to speak about at least one of your challenges/weakness.
- A telephone reference check can take between 10 – 45 mins.
- References will only be called after an interview and before you are offered the role.

Your referee must be your champion and have the ability to sell you into the role while being completely truthful. Volunteering and casual jobs supervisors are perfect individuals to request as referees.

6. Your checklist to success

- Check that you are eligible to work in Australia with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- Understand the Australian tax system and get your tax file number www.ato.gov.au
- Check if your existing qualifications and skills meet Australian standards (e.g. Vetassess skills assessment)
- Improve your English communication skills
  - Join clubs and groups that only speak English. Listen to the radio, watch TV, films and read books in English
  - Make friends with locals to improve your colloquial English language skills
- Get local work experience to understand Australian culture and workplace expectations
  - Work in a part-time or casual job during semester or fulltime during the holidays
  - Seek opportunities in your industry field which will give you experience related to your studies. (e.g. voluntary job in your industry)
- Take part in extra-curricular activities
  - Take part in activities with clubs, professional associations and teams to develop your employability skills that graduate employers value (e.g. Time management, leadership, teamwork and communication skills)
Graduate job searching for international students
A guide to applying in your home country

Job searching in two countries with different recruitment cycles can be difficult.

Follow our guide to help you prepare for your job search.

When do employers recruit?

In Australia, recruiters traditionally seek final year students for Graduate Programs (12–24 month programs) around March. Internships for 2nd year students begin to be advertised from April–September. This is for most positions, but there are still a scattering all year round. In October, we start to see vacancies for graduating students.

Do you know which year graduates are recruited in your home country? Do they have similar Graduate Programs and Graduate roles being offered at different times of year? Do they have preferences to hire people with internships?

Which overseas employers are recruiting?

If you have friends who are studying at University in your home country, it is best to ask them for some help! Find out your country’s recruitment pattern, and ask if your friends can find out which employers will be on campus or offering networking events. Does their university have a Careers website, listing companies and who they are recruiting? Friends who have studied or gained employment in your own country may have already gained some knowledge about the employment market. Take advantage of your network both in Australia and overseas. Connections are very important in all countries.

Where do employers advertise?

All countries, regions and industries vary in terms of where and when they list vacancies. Visit GoinGlobal via UQ StudentHub for top tips for job searching in your home country. Popular ways to advertise include: social media, LinkedIn, professional associations, company websites and relevant job search engines.

Will you be eligible to apply?

Eligibility to apply generally refers to the timing of your graduation and the commencement of their program. Most people are eligible for more than they realise! At the end of the guide, you will find an email template drafted to contact employers you would like to work for. You will need to alter this to ensure it has the appropriate tone and language for your country of choice.

When can you apply if your graduation date is different from home country start date?

Each country is different. Some countries open their vacancies at the same time, and others advertise in a similar recruitment cycle to Australia. Planning 12 months ahead is the best way to find out what application timeline you will have to anticipate. It may also help to contact companies to explain your situation and see if you are eligible to apply. A basic template is provided in this guide.

What will assist me to become a competitive candidate?

Now that you are a student or graduate of UQ, employers in your home country will have different expectations of you. Typically, these include a high level of conversational English (verbal and written) and a deeper insight into business practices in the country where you completed your degree. All countries have different recruitment cycles, methods and selection criteria. For more specific information, you will need to do further research to get an indication.

GoinGlobal

As a UQ student or alumnus/a, you now have access to GoinGlobal, which provides resources on work permit/visa regulations, job search sources, resume tips, cultural/interviewing advice.

Making contact with prospective employers

This is an example written from an Australian perspective. Research the tone, content and how direct you can be in these types of emails for your home country. For more examples of writing styles in different countries, please visit the Application section in GoinGlobal, or search online for templates in the language of your home country.

Dear ____________,

[Company name] is renowned for their ________________ and _________________. I admire [company name]'s determination to ________________ and dedication to ________________. It is this reason that I aspire to work for you in the role of ________________ and contribute to this organisation through my education from the University of Queensland, Australia and experience in ________________.

As graduation dates differ in Australia and _____________, could you please advise me of the best way and time to apply with [company name]? My graduation will be [month/year] and I would like to apply for the [year] Graduate program intake.

1. If I apply from Australia, could I interview online and start after graduating in Australia?
2. Does [company name] offer two intakes per year?
3. Am I eligible to apply for the following year in [year after your graduation]?

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and learning more about how I can learn more from this great company.

Kind regards,

[Your name]