TRANSITION FOR SUCCESS

A GUIDE TO THE MALAYSIAN EMPLOYMENT MARKET

MONASH ALUMNI
Welcome to the Monash alumni network. You’ve just joined the ranks of over 460,000 graduates of Monash University and you’re about to discover the value of this vibrant and diverse community.

Moving back home to start your career can be daunting, which is why this guide has been prepared to make the transition as easy as possible.

We’ll help you unlock all you need for successful job seeking. Our summary of major job boards, recruitment firms and graduate employers in Malaysia will ensure that you start your job search in the right place.

Throughout this guide, Malaysian alumni will share their personal experiences and lend their expertise as you transition home to the exciting first rung of your career.

We hope it will prove an invaluable resource as you go through the first exciting stages of setting yourself up for success. But whatever part of your career journey you’re on, our alumni community will be your Monash family, for life.
THE MALAYSIAN
EMPLOYMENT MARKET

Malaysia is one of the most dynamic countries in Southeast Asia with traditionally robust economic growth. By transitioning from an industrial economy to one known for progressive digital technology and a strong financial sector, Malaysia has experienced a surge in demand for highly-skilled, internationally-educated graduates like you.

A dynamic economy and developed digital infrastructure have made Malaysia a highly attractive market for e-commerce across Southeast Asia. With many global, regional and national players established and thriving in the Malaysian economy there is an increasing search for a new generation of leaders who understand and thrive in culturally diverse and multifaceted environments.

Like much of Southeast Asia, the demand for skilled graduate talent in Malaysia remains strong. Employers are looking for graduates who can demonstrate in-demand technical skills – particularly those related to digital technologies – alongside highly sought-after enterprise skills such as cross-cultural understanding. The highest volume job opportunities for graduates in Malaysia are in information technology, fintech, banking and manufacturing and supply chains.

“The trend going forward will be that companies will reduce the permanent workforce. They will start to work with experienced and trusted independent workers. So, my advice is to start building up your portfolio and your visibility online (i.e. on LinkedIn). Build on this opportunity.”

- Zohrab Chong, Founder & Chief Enabling Officer, Enablerz Consulting & Solutions

“I feel that we need our undergrads and grads to embrace the fluidity and dynamics of the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) setting within the corporate world. There is also a need for them to understand their purpose – who they are – and on branding and positioning themselves better in this very competitive talent ecosystem.”

- Pun Tian Pouw, Principal/Founder, TPPun Advisory
MALAYSIAN EMPLOYER INSIGHTS

Malaysian employers report a shortage of quality talent. Employers are not only looking for hard skills such as computer programming, project management and data management – but are also after soft skills, such as stakeholder management, communication and problem solving. Start-ups and technology businesses also express a desire for candidates with commercial awareness and an entrepreneurial focus.

The following table provides a handy checklist for the current talent requirements of Malaysian employers, underlining the key opportunities for new graduates entering the job market.

<table>
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<th>EMPLOYER INSIGHT</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>VALUED SKILLS</strong></td>
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<td>Employers are increasingly seeking graduates who complement their technical skills with highly developed enterprise skills, particularly communication, interpersonal skills, commercial acumen, problem solving, and critical thinking skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The skills we value most highly are clarity of thought, problem solving skills, analytical skills and attitude.”</td>
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<td>Manoj Parikatil, Talent Acquisition Director, Capillary Technologies</td>
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<td><strong>HIRING INTENTIONS</strong></td>
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<td>Organisations see their graduate talent as the next generation of leaders and technical specialists who will future-proof their business. They are seeking to hire talent that will develop their future capability internally.</td>
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<td>“The intention is to train and groom them in the role that they were hired for and prepare them for the next level.”</td>
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<td>Shankar Arumugan, Senior Recruiter, Baker Hughes</td>
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<td><strong>INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE</strong></td>
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<td>Multinational corporations (MNCs) and large local companies are increasingly seeking individuals who have studied abroad for graduate roles with a view to supporting their international operations or growth ambitions. Such graduates are valued for their enhanced cross-cultural and global market knowledge.</td>
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<td>“International studies bring students with an exposure to different cultures, able to adapt in different environments and also with good communication skills”</td>
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<td>Roger Lai, Business HR Manager, Sapura Energy</td>
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<td><strong>TECHNOLOGY</strong></td>
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<td>Technological advances are significantly changing ways of working for Malaysian corporations. The adoption of new technologies is predicted to be widespread in the next decade. Graduates have the opportunity to lead new ways of working and to embed technology-driven process improvements.</td>
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<td>“The urgency of embracing digital transformation would not have been so great as it is today. Those who were not comfortable with technology will have to learn in order to survive. We are now forced to adapt.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zohrab Chong, Founder of Enablerz Consulting &amp; Solutions</td>
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<td><strong>HIRING BUDGET</strong></td>
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<td>Organisations identified a low hiring budget as a barrier to securing good talent. Salary expectations of returning graduates are generally above industry averages.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“This divergence in growth trends across education levels alludes to a more serious phenomenon – the income premium for education has narrowed in Malaysia.”</td>
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<td>Malaysian Central Bank</td>
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Consider this:
- The experience of studying abroad is a competitive advantage, but only if you can clearly articulate this during the recruitment process.
- Identify examples of enterprise skills that you have developed during your study abroad and include these on your CV.
- Even if you have not studied a technology discipline, building your digital capability is highly advantageous to your career prospects.
CAREER CONSIDERATIONS FOR RETURNEES

You are part of an important cohort of young Malaysians who chose to pursue a high-quality education overseas to expand your career prospects. High quality graduate talent, particularly those with international study and work experience, is in demand in Malaysia.

If you’re looking to fast-track your job search and career development upon returning to Malaysia, your focus should be on gaining industry knowledge and experience. Malaysian employers identify industry knowledge and experience as the most important key quality they look for when recruiting graduates. Discipline, accountability and agility or flexibility to change were also identified as key graduate qualities.

Opportunities for returnees like you where an international study experience has demonstrably expanded your skills, experience, behaviour and knowledge are great. Articulating the benefits of your international education is vital.

Consider this:

- While there is obvious demand for graduates in fintech and financial services, IT and manufacturing, there are also significant talent shortages in:
  - computer science, specifically in cyber security
  - engineering, particularly in robotic process automation and business process mapping
  - data science, particularly in big data analytics.

- Targeting growth industries such as digital and technology, infrastructure and construction and financial services will accelerate your employment prospects.

“While the Malaysian economy faces some slowdown, this is a good opportunity for both employers and job seekers to take stock on what’s needed to take them into the future. Core competencies matter, but employers must not forget about the growing disposition towards other talent attraction factors, such as flexible working arrangements and work-life balance strategies.”

- Ai Ling Lee, Managing Director, RGF Executive Search Malaysia
As a Project Coordinator for the Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad, Amalina has first-hand experience in connecting graduates with various industries across Malaysia and enabling them to be employable and career-focused.

Amalina completed a Bachelor of Arts with a major in International Studies and a minor in Psychology.

Returning to Malaysia, Amalina took six months off to settle back into life there. She describes her experience moving back home as challenging.

“It was a lot of learning how to be patient.”

Before and during her six-month hiatus in Kuala Lumpur, Amalina used various platforms to figure out what she wanted to do. She found the job-seeking platform Graduan the most helpful. Besides listing international job vacancies, Graduan also hosts career fairs in major cities like London and Melbourne. Amalina attended a career fair hosted by Graduan.

“I participated in the fair and met with the CEO of the company I currently work with. We connected and exchanged cards and the rest is history. The career fair is a great platform for Malaysian students to connect with leaders from big companies in Malaysia.”

Now that Amalina has had experience working as a recruiter, she recommends using LinkedIn as well.

“LinkedIn is definitely a great platform overall to connect and search for jobs. Knowing how to use it helps and companies also use the platform to update their vacancies very regularly. If you are specifically looking for a job in a start-up in Malaysia, WOBB is the best platform to use.”

Networking plays a crucial part in acquiring your first job and will continue to play a role throughout your career. Amalina mentions that if she hadn’t met the CEO at Graduan’s event, she would not have known about the company.

“My father told me to always be nice to everyone, you never know who you will meet again in the future. Building relationships and being kind to people, no matter who they are, can definitely bring you places.”

Besides researching job possibilities and networking, internships are another great way to gain experience and future opportunities. Amalina wishes she’d done more of them, and earlier on.

“Go do as many internships as possible! If you don’t know what you want to do, go for an internship you’ve always wanted to try. Internships are a place where you get to learn new things and dip your toes in working life!”
CHANNELS TO EMPLOYMENT

When looking for a job, it pays to know there is not one single path to take. The open job market refers to the most visible and traditional methods of finding a job, such as through advertising and job listing websites. The hidden job market refers to the opportunities that are not advertised and need to be discovered by yourself. This is where your proactive skills come into play. As a job seeker, you need to be active across both open and hidden markets if you want to increase your chances of finding ideal employment.

MAJOR JOB BOARDS

Job boards are a great source of employment information and graduate opportunities. Most job boards have online job postings, search functionality, the ability for jobseekers to create a profile and resume search services for employers.

Major Malaysian job boards include:

Careerjet
Careerjet is a job search aggregation tool allowing users to quickly and conveniently search jobs from over 37,000 websites globally. Within Malaysia, Careerjet has over 70,000 active job listings at any one time.

JobStreet
JobStreet provides access to company profiles that allow insight into a potential employer. The JobStreet resume database is used by many recruiters seeking high quality candidates.

WOB
WOB is a Malaysian job search platform founded in 2014 by Derek Toh, a former Associate Director at recruitment firm Robert Walters, Malaysia. WOB is specifically aimed at promoting job opportunities for graduate and early career talent.

MauKerja
MauKerja is the second largest generalist job board in Malaysia, with thousands of job listings from both government and private sectors.

Monster
Monster has been operating in Malaysia for over 20 years. It has expanded from a job board to a global provider of job seeking, career management, recruitment and talent management products and services.
COMPANY CAREERS PAGES

It’s important to look at the career page found on the websites of most large local organisations and multinational corporations. These pages provide information on:

- Organisational purpose, values and strategy
- Hiring intentions and recruitment processes
- Employee benefits and career opportunities
- Advertised job vacancies

Career pages provide access to both open and hidden opportunities. They advertise roles and allow you to proactively set up a candidate profile within the company’s talent portal. Where an organisation’s talent portal is strong, generally companies will not advertise; rather they will run an off-market recruitment process with individuals from their database.

Returnee graduates are encouraged to monitor a wide range of career pages for potential employers.

RECRUITMENT FIRMS

Recruitment agencies are an access point to graduate jobs with large organisations. It’s important to research the firms operating in your discipline area, but significant recruitment firms in Malaysia include:

Michael Page

Michael Page is a leading professional recruitment agency specialising in the recruitment of permanent, contract and temporary positions on behalf of the world’s top companies across multiple industries. Michael Page opened its first office in Asia in 1994 and has developed its presence into many of the main business hubs in the region since then.

Robert Walters

Part of the international Robert Walters Group, Robert Walters Malaysia has been successfully operating for over 10 years. It launched a second office in Penang, in 2016.

JAC Recruitment

JAC Recruitment is an international recruitment company. Established in 1994 in Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysia operations also covers Penang and Johor.

EPS

EPS was established in 1993, with a range of professional talent based services including executive search, graduate recruitment, and recruitment process outsourcing (RPO).

The Recruiter

The Recruiter is a specialist professional recruitment consultancy in Malaysia. It provides candidates with permanent, contract and temporary placement services in engineering, accountancy and finance, supply chain, human resource, support and administration, information technology, sales and marketing, operation, procurement and logistics.

Malaysia Job Nexus

Malaysia Job Nexus helps graduates find a job faster by connecting them with over 40 recruitment agencies in Malaysia. After completing a profile, and submitting a resume, graduates are connected with recruitment firms that operate specifically within their given field.
NETWORKING PLATFORMS

LinkedIn is the primary business networking platform in Malaysia but it’s worth considering using both of the following platforms to build your professional connections and access to networking events:

LinkedIn
LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional networking platform and it has more than four million users in Malaysia. Jobseekers can connect with professionals in their target discipline or prospective companies and get information about potential opportunities. Many employers will also post job information on their official pages to attract talent.

Gradmalaysia
Gradmalaysia is one of Malaysia’s largest job boards for graduate job and internship vacancies. In addition to specialising in graduate recruitment, Gradmalaysia also runs a range of different professional development initiatives to support graduates’ transition into the workforce.

LARGE GRADUATE EMPLOYERS

Many large organisations and multinational corporations offer structured graduate programs. Generally, information is available on company career pages regarding the associated selection criteria and recruitment process.

Below are some key employers of graduates sorted by disciplines. They are rated by salary and benefits, development potential, work culture, employee satisfaction and employee locality.

**Business and Commerce**

| 1. Petronas | 6. Sime Darby |
| 2. Bank Negara Malaysia | 7. Lembaga Tabung Haji |
| 3. Google | 8. Maybank |
| 4. AirAsia | 9. CIMB Group |
| 5. Malaysia Airlines | 10. Bursa Malaysia |

**Engineering**

| 2. Shell | 7. ExxonMobil |
| 4. Schlumberger | 9. Microsoft |
| 5. Google |

**Humanities/Liberal Arts/Education**

| 2. Astro | 7. Lembaga Tabung Haji |
| 4. Petronas | 9. RTM |
| 5. Karangkraf | 10. Samsung |

**Information Technology**

| 1. Samsung Malaysia Electronica | 6. AirAsia |
| 2. Accenture | 7. Infineon Technologies |
| 3. IBM Malaysia | 8. Petronas |
| 4. Microsoft | 9. Huawei Technologies |
| 5. Hewlett Packard | 10. Intel Malaysia |

**Natural Sciences**

| 1. Petronas | 6. Google |
| 2. Sime Darby | 7. Lembaga Taabung Haji |
| 3. Shell | 8. Schlumberger |
| 5. Bank Negara Malaysia | 10. Malaysia Airlines |

**Plan of attack**

- Register on the careers pages of your target employers and monitor their social media for hiring activity.
- Large organisations are often the most difficult to get into, so prepare diligently for the recruitment process.
- Companies report receiving up to 500 candidates per role for graduate programs – remember, persistence is key.
- Engage with anybody in your alumni or social network, already employed within your target organisation to get better insight into the selection process.
Jie Sheng graduated from Monash University in 2016 with a Bachelor of Accounting and Finance. Soon after obtaining his degree he started working for Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in Malaysia where he still works today as an Associate.

During his years at university, Jie Sheng completed two internships at EY. In his first year at Monash he worked as an Audit Intern for EY and was an Advisory Intern for three months during his second year. These internships helped him secure a position at BCG before graduating.

Jie Sheng describes his transition back to Malaysia as smooth. He did not feel like he had to prepare much for his return home and adjusted quickly.

“While it did take some getting used to after almost two years living abroad, it was good to be back in Malaysia.”

Luckily, Monash helped Jie Sheng in staying connected with his friends.

“Studying at Monash meant I always kept in touch with those I knew from my time studying in Malaysia and there was a strong Malaysian presence at the Clayton campus.”

Jie Shen believes that his transition home was relatively easy because he’d secured a job before graduating by doing his research and applying for various positions.

“For me, it was about frontloading most of the employment search prior to graduating. If I was in a position to give any advice on this, it would be to work on getting employment prior to graduation, as you would still have the drive and the motivation to keep you going without the added pressure of being unemployed.”

Jie Sheng prioritised job fairs above the various recruitment platforms.

“Job fairs gave me valuable, in-person interactions with recruiters. Specifically, I attended Malaysian job fairs while in Melbourne, and quickly secured a position prior to graduating.”

He recommends doing your homework before going to these career fairs.

“I would suggest students think what career they would like to be in, and just Google it. Google for industry, Google for work-life balance, and (being realistic) Google for pay.”

He warns graduates against being complacent.

“Realistically speaking, you have an edge over the local crowd as a result of studying abroad in a top 100-ranked university. However, don’t be complacent. There are many out there that have worked, strived harder for the same role you are applying for. Do your homework, but take confidence in having graduated abroad.”
Zohrab has had a very diverse career since graduating from Monash University in 1994. On returning home to Malaysia, he started practicing law but soon realised it wasn’t what he wanted to do. He left after just three months and began working at the South African Embassy in Malaysia where he had the honour of meeting Nelson Mandela, twice.

The 1997 economic crisis that hit Malaysia saw Zohrab lose his job in business development and forced him to change his career path. He took a job in the insurance sector before moving through different jobs in different sectors, finally finding his passion – people development. He set up his own company that enables business and community transformation through people development.

“I decided that it was time for me to take a break from the corporate world and to start my own business. I am now able to share my years of experience (what worked well and what didn’t work so well) and translate those into a learning environment. I love to see people grow, develop and be successful.”

Talking about his experience at Monash University, Zohrab says he feels lucky he had the opportunity to network and connect with people from different backgrounds.

“The capability to communicate and network is important. You need to feel comfortable in reaching out and speaking up, because if you want to be successful you cannot just sit and wait for it. You have to ask and go get it!”

The right attitude can make you stand out amongst the other candidates.

“One needs to be positive and have the humble posture of learning and wanting to improve. Humbleness and willingness to learn is the key to achieving your goals.”

Having a positive attitude is important, especially during the times when it’s not easy to find work. Malaysia’s economic growth is on a minor decline and Zohrab says that at the moment jobs are not easy to come by.

“So, one needs to not be overly picky in terms of what will be your first job. You need to start somewhere and try to learn as much as you can before you move on.”

Zohrab sees a trend in companies reducing their permanent staff and hiring more part-time or contract workers.

“It’s not the end of the world if you cannot find a full-time job. Look at different options, such as offering your skills as a freelancer or even start your own business. My advice is to start building your portfolio. Try to gain more visibility on LinkedIn by sharing your thoughts or participating in publishing research papers.”

ZOHRAB CHONG’S STORY

“One needs to be positive and have the humble posture of learning and wanting to improve. Humbleness and willingness to learn is the key to achieving your goals.”