



## **So, you want to be the next UN Secretary-General?**

**UNA-UK Young Professionals Network's Guide To  
Careers at the United Nations**

[www.una.org.uk/ypn](http://www.una.org.uk/ypn)

2008

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## 1. Introduction

*"The rising interest in a career with the United Nations demonstrates a strong willingness on the part of young candidates to undergo extensive and competitive procedures in order to play a role in dealing with pressing global challenges."*

Guido Bertucci, Director, DPEPA/DESA  
Foreword, *A Guide to a Career with the United Nations*

*"The demographic profile of staff in most organizations of the United Nations (UN) system, where up to half of the members of the secretariats are due to retire during this decade, combined with evolving mandates and policies requiring new types of skills not always available among the current staff, call for a rejuvenation of the human resources of the secretariats and for careful succession planning."*

Francesco Mezzalama, Joint Inspection Unit  
Executive Summary, *Young Professionals in Selected Organizations of the United Nations System: Recruitment, Management and Retention*

These two statements seem complementary: more young people want to work for the UN. The UN needs more young people. The reality is not quite as simple. Working for the UN can be a rewarding experience in many ways. Apart from being able to contribute to the principles outlined in the UN Charter – young professionals increasingly equate job satisfaction with achieving something that is 'worthwhile' – there are individual incentives, which can include first-class benefits, a comparatively high salary, and mobility, both in terms of travel and job diversity. The UN is the only organisation that recruits young professionals through National Competitive Recruitment Examination (NCE), to ensure a high quality of recruits, as well as a good balance of gender and country-representation. However, this has led to a more complex, cumbersome and time-consuming experience for applicants. Delays in placing a candidate are common. There is uncertainty over where – and how – to apply, as the recruitment processes are different for each agency. The competition for jobs has enabled the UN to stick to its demanding requirements. UN employees are experts in their field, have extensive experience, hold at least a masters degree, and are fluent in at least one of the two working languages of the UN (English and French). As a result, the average age of entry-level employees has been rising steadily.

So, it's fair to say that the UN is not the easiest place to find a job, and finding accurate information on how to do so can be just as tricky. The UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs has produced the comprehensive 'A Guide to a Career with the United Nations' (available via the search option on [www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org)). But at 78 pages, though certainly to be recommended, the guide is not an easy read. Moreover, information regarding application processes, especially for the various agencies, is constantly being updated.

To help you with your search – be it for permanent employment, employment as a consultant, internships or volunteering, the YPN Steering Committee has produced this guide to try to answer as many of your questions as possible. We hope it will be useful to you.

*YPN Steering Committee, March 2008*

## 2. Overview

The best place to start is to think about which part of the UN you would like to work for and what type of job it is you want to do. Next, you need to consider what the best path would be. In general, if you are a graduate school student, the best option would be an internship. If you are a recent graduate, the National Competitive Recruitment Examinations or the Associate Experts Programme would be appropriate avenues. Finally, if you are a professional with experience, you can apply to professional, expert and consultant vacancies.

### The 'Where'

The UN Charter sets out the main purposes of the international organisation: to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and to be a centre for harmonising the actions of nations in attaining these ends. These functions are broadly distributed among the six principal organs of the UN – the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council (now suspended), International Court of Justice and the Secretariat. The UN family is much larger, encompassing 15 agencies and several programmes and bodies. The functions of these bodies often overlap, and recently, the UN High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence recommended the development of One Country Programmes to serve as a hub for all the various agencies present in a country. Agencies such as the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have their own governing bodies and budgets, standards and guidelines, and, of course, recruitment policies. You should also note that agencies recruit their clerical and secretarial staff locally.

To gain a feel for what an organ or agency does, you should visit its website, contact the department directly and also research the locations of the headquarters and field offices.

### The 'What'

The UN Factsheet 'Employment Opportunities with the United Nations' (available from [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) in the 'About the UN' section) describes the different categories of occupations. A brief summary of the major categories is given here.

**Technical Assistance Experts:** The UN has programmes of technical cooperation in the areas of economic development, population, human settlements, statistics, natural resources, transportation, trade and development, environment and other technical fields that are not specifically dealt with by specialised agencies. These programmes are administered by UNDP. Experts are normally required to have extensive experience and a high professional standing, and candidates who are relatively junior are only rarely selected. If you are interested, contact:

*Technical Assistance Recruitment and Administrative Service  
Room DCI-1208  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017  
Fax: +1 212 963 1272*

**Professionals:** These posts are for persons with specific professional qualifications in fields related to the work of the UN. This can be in administration, economics, information systems, finance, language and related work, legal and related work, library, public information, social development or statistics. Entry-level posts are filled through competitive recruitment examinations (see section 4 of this guide) and are organised on a rotational basis for nationals of inadequately represented member states. You are expected to have an advanced university degree in addition to relevant professional experience. For further information, contact:

*Professional and above Staffing Section  
Room S-2500  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: +1 212 963 1090  
Fax: +1 212 963 1272  
Email: [staffing@un.org](mailto:staffing@un.org)*

**Languages:** The UN holds examinations to create a roster of candidates for translator and interpreter posts. Translator positions require candidates to be able to translate from at least two of the six official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). Interpreters are required to interpret simultaneously into one of the six official languages and must have full auditory comprehension of at least two other official languages. If you are interested, contact:

*United Nations Language Examinations  
Operational Services Division  
Office of Human Resources Management  
Room S-24101  
New York, NY 10017*

**Middle and Higher Level Posts:** Generally, it is UN policy to announce all vacancies except entry-level positions. These are filled with special emphasis placed on recruiting from as wide a geographic area as possible. To be considered, you must have an advanced university degree as well as relevant professional experience (usually a minimum of six years). As well as looking at 'Galaxy', the UN Human Resources staffing system (<http://jobs.un.org>), and the websites of the individual agencies, you should seek information from the foreign ministry of your member state (for UK nationals, DfID is the best source for advice) as well as from professional institutions such as universities. Contact information is the same as for the 'professionals' category.

**Peacekeeping:** In addition to the 'blue helmets', peacekeeping operations rely on civilian staff to work in the fields of political affairs, legal affairs, human rights, election monitoring, humanitarian assistance, public information, general administration, procurement, logistics, civil engineering and electronic data. To obtain such a post, you must have a proven track record in one of those fields; an advanced university degree; at least four years' professional experience; and fluency in English and/or French. Fluency in one of the other six official UN languages, as well as professional experience in developing countries, is also an advantage. Applicants must be in excellent health and prepared to work in difficult and dangerous conditions. They must also be available at short notice. Most missions are

classified as 'non-family' duty stations and the compensation package includes a salary and subsistence allowance. To request an application form, contact:

*United Nations Personnel Management and Support Service  
Office of Mission Support  
Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
DCI-928  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: +1 212 963 6114  
Fax: +1 212 963 0664*

**Project Personnel:** Requests from developing countries for assistance are distributed among the participating organisations on the basis of their main fields of specialisation. These fields are the same as for Technical Assistance Experts. Generally, the requests are for senior advisers and you should have had long experience in your field. If you are interested, contact:

*United Nations Project Personnel Management and Training Service  
Room DCI-1418  
New York, NY 10017*

**General Service:** Secretarial and clerical positions require a minimum typing speed of 50-55 words per minute, with preference given to applicants with strong word-processing and language skills (generally bilingual in English and French or Spanish). There is also a need for high-speed text processors in the six official languages, required to type from direct dictation or to transcribe from sound-recording machines. Text processors need to have a typing speed of more than 55 words per minute and must have strong word-processing skills.

Vacancies occur infrequently and exams are held periodically to establish a roster from which posts are filled. All applicants must have completed secondary education. Accounting and statistical clerks should normally have a relevant undergraduate degree. Candidates must pass the general aptitude test and/or typing tests – the tests are held at the UN headquarters in New York and applicants living outside New York must pay their own travel expenses. Please note that positions outside headquarters are recruited locally. If you are interested, contact:

*General Service & Related Categories Staffing Unit  
Operational Services Division  
Office of Human Resources Management  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: +1 212 963 8876  
Email: [gsapplications@un.org](mailto:gsapplications@un.org)*

### 3. General information about working at the UN

#### Grade Structure

The vast majority of positions within the UN system are split into Professional (grades P-1 to P-5) and General (grades G-1 to G-7). Grade D posts are at director-level and usually involve running a division or section of the UN.

Professional posts usually require the applicant to be educated to at least degree level, with more work experience required at higher levels.

P-1	Recent graduates or UN General Service staff who have passed internal qualification examinations
P-2	Examination or, if external recruitment, 2 to 3 years of experience
P-3	Examination or, if external recruitment, 4 to 8 years of experience
P-4	8 to 12 years of experience
P-5	13 to 17 years of experience

General Service posts do not normally require applicants to have a university degree, although they generally have specific requirements such as secretarial skills or languages. The only way of moving from a General to a Professional post is to pass an internal qualification examination, which is like the NCE (see section 4).

#### Languages

The working languages of the Secretariat are English and French. The official languages of the UN are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

#### Salaries, benefits and related allowances

Compensation in the professional and senior positions is made up of two main elements: salary and post adjustment. Starting salaries are based upon academic and professional qualifications, as well as the level of the post. The base salary scales are set by the General Assembly. Up-to-date information on salary scales and benefits can be found at [www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/salaries\\_allowances](http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/salaries_allowances). To give you an idea of the range, currently, the gross salary for the first point on the P-1 grade is US\$44,614; at the last point on the grade, it is US\$58,308. On the P-5 grade, the range is from US\$104,600 to US\$131,019. General Service salaries are dependent on the location. As an example, an employee on grade G-1 at the UN office in Vienna would have a gross salary ranging from €25,549 to €34,903. At G-7, the range is from €64,728 to €89,629.

There is also a post-adjustment element for professionals based on the cost of living and the rate of exchange of local currency vis-à-vis the US dollar at each duty station. You should take into account that some UN employees, especially those with families, state that current post adjustment levels do not necessarily compensate for the true cost of living in high-cost cities such as Geneva, Rome or Vienna. The amounts provided vary depending on the employee's salary level and dependency status. Professionals are expected to serve at various duty stations during the course of their careers and they receive an assignment allowance while away from their home countries. An education grant and dependency allowance is paid for each eligible child. Professionals may also be eligible for rental subsidy.

Benefits available to all staff include paid annual leave, sick leave and home leave; contributory health, dental and group life insurance coverage; and various shipping,

travel and installation allowances related to appointments to, and transfer between, duty stations.

**Pensions, length of service & retirement**

Staff members with regular appointments contribute to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. The monthly contribution is tied to salary level as determined by the General Assembly.

Many of the UN agencies have established a mandatory retirement age for individuals in professional positions; new employees are generally not allowed to remain employed beyond age 62, and most agencies prefer not to appoint candidates who will not be able to complete at least five years of service before reaching that age. This mandatory retirement limit also applies to individuals seeking positions in the peacekeeping and technical assistance programmes. However, for consultants and for posts of limited duration in which pension issues are not a consideration, age is generally not a factor in the selection process.

**Recruitment constraints (or advantages!)**

The UN is under continuous pressure to enable as many member states as possible to have their nationals represented, and geographic balance is considered when filling vacancies. There is also an emphasis to recruit more nationals from developing countries. Some UN agencies have developed formulae for determining the 'desirable range' for the equitable representation of member countries. These formulae are generally based on member states' financial contributions, their population, and other membership criteria. Similarly, in terms of achieving gender balance, some UN agencies give hiring priority to qualified women applicants in hopes of increasing their representation in professional and senior posts.

## 4. Applying for a permanent job

### Where do I find out about job opportunities?

The main UN job portal is 'Galaxy', the UN Human Resources staffing system (<http://jobs.un.org>). Vacancies are also listed on the UN International Civil Service Commission website (<http://icsc.un.org>). This website is also a good source for more detailed information on salaries, benefits etc., as well as for statistical data on employment at the UN.

It is also a good idea to search for jobs by the agency you are interested in or by the type of job. Contact details for the agencies can be found on their websites; for a one-stop list of agency contact details, look at 'A Guide to a Career with the United Nations' (available at [www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org)). Contact information by type of job is provided in section 1 of this guide. You should also get in touch with your country's foreign ministry and/or permanent mission to the UN, or contact a UN Information Centre (UNIC), to find out about more opportunities. Contact information for Permanent Missions and UNICs can be found at [www.un.org/aroundworld](http://www.un.org/aroundworld)

### What sorts of jobs are offered on Galaxy?

Galaxy advertises General Service-, Professional- and Director-level posts, primarily within the UN Secretariat. It also lists some opportunities in agencies, as well as some vacancies in peacekeeping or other field missions. While you will see P-1 and P-2 posts advertised on Galaxy, those positions are reserved for those that pass the National Competitive Recruitment Examinations (NCE) (see section 4 of this guide) – you can not apply for them unless you pass the NCE.

It is important to note that managers are permitted to look for a suitable candidate internally, before viewing any external applications.

### How do I apply?

If you are applying for a post on Galaxy, you must first register as a 'user'. Once you have registered, you will have a 'My UN' page, where you will be able to create a Personal History Profile (PHP). This is effectively an account through which you can manage all your UN applications.

Galaxy is fairly simple to navigate, although some of the information – especially personal data such as employment history – can be tiresome to enter as the system is slow and not as concise as it could be. However, it is worth filling out as you need to enter your personal information only once; your profile is saved and can be accessed for future applications.

For more information, visit:

<https://jobs.un.org/Galaxy/Release3/info/guide.aspx?lang=1200>

## 5. National Competitive Recruitment Examinations (NCE)

### What are the National Competitive Recruitment Examinations?

The NCE is held every February and it is the primary route into the United Nations for graduates and young professionals. Junior professionals (grade P-1 and P-2) and professionals (grade P-3) are recruited through these examinations. Examinations are held for a number of occupational groups, including administration, economics, electronic data processing, finance, legal affairs, library, political affairs, public information, social development, and statistics.

### Eligibility

In order to qualify for a P-1 or P-2 position, applicants must:

- possess a first-level university degree
- be 32 years of age or younger
- be a national from one of the member states
- be fluent in either English or French

Please note that examinations are open to applicants who are nationals of countries that are currently under-represented among UN staff, and who have a degree in a subject related to occupational areas specified in the current year.

In order to qualify for P-3 positions, applicants must:

- possess an advanced university degree
- have four years of professional experience
- be 39 years of age or younger
- be a national from one of the member states
- be fluent in either English or French

*Please note that examinations for P-3 positions have been suspended until further notice.*

### What exactly does the NCE involve?

The examination consists of a written examination and an interview. The written examination is divided into two parts. Part I is a General Paper (4 hours) testing analytical skills, drafting skills and knowledge of international affairs. Part II is a Specialised Paper (4 hours) testing substantive skills in a chosen occupational group. On the basis of the performance in the written examination, candidates are then invited to an interview by the Board of Examiners. The interview will be conducted in either French or English.

### What happens next?

Successful applicants are put on a roster until a P-1 or P-2 position that is suited to their skills and experience becomes available. Upon taking up the position, applicants are awarded a two-year probationary contract. Provided your performance is satisfactory, you will then be awarded a permanent contract.

### What is a P-2 position?

P-2 is usually the first step on the UN career ladder for those seeking professional posts. The role will vary from department to department. In the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), for instance, you would probably be a desk officer for a specific country or region, researching and briefing others on political developments in the region,

while in the Department of Public Information (DPI), P-2 posts are usually press officers that summarise meetings and draft press briefings.

**How to apply**

In 2007 the UK was sufficiently represented within the UN Secretariat, so the NCE was not open to British nationals. However, the number of British citizens working for the UN changes every year, as people join and leave, so it is possible that British applications will be accepted in the future. For the latest news on which nationalities can apply for the NCE, visit: [www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm)

If your country is eligible, you can download an application form from [www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/htm)

**For further information** visit [www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm) or write to:

*United Nations  
Examinations and Tests Services  
Staff Development Services  
Specialist Services Division  
Office of Human Resources Management  
Room S-2590  
New York  
NY 10017*

## 6. Associate Expert Programme and Junior Professional Officer Programme

### Associate Expert Programme

The programme offers young professionals who are graduates from universities or institutions of higher education an opportunity to acquire professional experience in technical co-operation at the United Nations Secretariat. Associate experts are recruited under bilateral agreements between the UN and participating donor countries for development projects or regional projects/activities.

### What to expect

Associate experts perform their duties under the supervision of either an experienced expert and the Chief Technical Adviser, or of a regional adviser. If recruited for projects of a national character, you might work under the supervision of the National Director responsible for the project.

If your performance is satisfactory, an initial one-year appointment may be extended. However, please note that although a few people manage to obtain permanent employment via this route, there is by no means an 'automatic transfer' to a regular position.

### Eligibility

You do not have to have extensive, or even any, professional experience. The necessary requirements to participate in the pre-selection process vary according to donor country. However, they basically correspond to the following:

- a degree in an area of development - the guidelines on [www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org) state that medicine, economy and commerce, political science, sociology, social sciences, statistics, international relations, law, engineering (civil, mechanical etc.) and computer science can be considered as relevant to 'development'
- a strong command of English and one of the other six official languages of the UN
- age below 30 years (33 for medical graduates)

Currently, the participating governments are:

- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- Luxembourg
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Turkey
- **United Kingdom\***

Associate Experts are generally nationals of these countries. Some of the above countries have in the past, however, agreed to finance nationals of developing countries, particularly of least developed countries, as Associate Experts.

### **Salary**

Upon receipt of a breakdown of estimated costs from the UN Associate Experts Programme, the donor country deposits the necessary funds to cover all costs, such as salary, allowances, insurance and travel expenses, as well as administrative expenses incurred by the UN. The salary levels of the associate experts are determined by the donor countries in consultation with the UN.

### **\*UK nationals**

In the UK, the main government department that deals with this programme is the Department for International Development (DfID), and the programme is only open to individuals already working within government departments.

All applicants must, therefore, have the support of their parent government department as it would be responsible for the full cost of such a placement within the programme.

*Please note that not all participating countries apply the same restrictions as the UK.*

### **Further information**

UK nationals should visit the DfID website ([www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)) for further information on this scheme.

Nationals of other participating countries should follow the same route, first contacting their relevant government department and then their country's permanent mission to the UN in New York.

For additional information, contact:

Associate Experts Programme  
One UN Plaza  
Room DC1-802  
New York  
NY 10017

### **Junior Professional Officers**

The Junior Professional Officer Programme (JPO) represents a working opportunity for young professionals with a limited experience. It is similar to the Associate Expert Programme in that it gives graduates pursuing a career in development with an experience and on-the-job training in the field of technical operation.

Whilst the Associate Expert Programme is run by the Secretariat, the Junior Officer Programme is coordinated by UNDP and its affiliated funds/programmes:

- Drylands Development Centre ([DDC](#))
- Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office ([IAPSO](#))
- United Nations Capital Development Fund ([UNCDF](#))
- United Nations Development Group Office ([UNDGO](#))
- United Nations Development Fund for Women ([UNIFEM](#))
- United Nations Volunteers ([UNV](#))
- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#))

- United Nations Population Fund ([UNFPA](#))
- United Nations Industrial Development Organisation ([UNIDO](#))
- United Nations Office for Project Services ([UNOPS](#))
- United Nations University ([UNU](#))
- Universal Postal Union ([UPU](#))
- World Health Organization ([WHO](#))
- Mekong River Commission ([MRC](#))

As of 1 March 2007, 247 JPOs are participating in the Programme, with 64% of them directly working with UNDP. JPOs represent close to 13% of UNDP's professional staff (estimate: 8% for UNOPS, 15% for UNDP, 14% for UNFPA and 18% for UNIDO).

### **What to expect**

JPOs serve primarily in one of the country offices of the participating agencies in the developing countries. Under the supervision of a senior staff member, JPOs work with international and national staff and are involved in the identification, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the UN agencies-supported programmes. Purposes of assignments vary and may have a country-specific, regional, sector-based or thematic focus. The UN agencies participating in the Programme make every effort to match individual's qualifications and interests with the requirements of the country office.

After an intensive pre-service training in New York and a period of on-the-job training, they are expected to assume considerable responsibilities, under the supervision of a senior staff member, either national or international at the country office level. The nature of the assignment can vary considerably:

- building-up and negotiating the UNDP country programme with government authorities, collaborating with representatives of bilateral assistance agencies and specialised UN organisations
- preparing documents required for the implementation of the country programme, including project descriptions, objectives, work plans, and budgets;
- monitoring project activities, conducting field visits and preparing progress reports;
- up-dating economic and social data and analysis, as well as information on all other development activities in the country;
- contacting UNDP Headquarters, other UN agencies and government authorities.

### **What next**

The experience as a JPO can be the first step in a career in the UN or the UNDP, but it is clear that there is no commitment from the UNDP to the national government to hire former JPOs. Upon completion of the programme, a former JPO can attend the national competitive exam, should he or she want to start a career in the Secretariat.

### **Eligibility**

Candidates for the JPO Programme are selected on a highly competitive basis. Applicants must:

- be under 32 years of age;
- have a Master's degree (or equivalent) in a development-related discipline

- have written and spoken proficiency in at least two of the three working languages used by UNDP: English, French and Spanish. Fluency in Arabic, Russian or Portuguese is an asset
- have excellent IT skills, including word-processing, database applications, presentation software and the Internet
- display evidence of ability to think strategically; to express ideas clearly; to work independently and in teams; to demonstrate a sense of self-assuredness combined with cultural and gender sensitivity;
- have a strong commitment to development; an interest in adapting to varied physical and professional environments; and a desire to work with people with different language, national and cultural backgrounds;
- have respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and the participating UN agencies Mission Statements

A minimum of one to two years of working experience in a developing country is also highly desirable.

JPOs are sponsored by their respective governments. Currently 23 donor governments participate in the Programme:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australia</li> <li>• Austria</li> <li>• Belgium</li> <li>• Canada</li> <li>• Denmark</li> <li>• Finland</li> <li>• France</li> <li>• Germany</li> <li>• Iceland</li> <li>• Ireland</li> <li>• Italy</li> <li>• Japan</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luxembourg</li> <li>• Monaco</li> <li>• the Netherlands</li> <li>• Norway</li> <li>• Portugal</li> <li>• Republic of Korea</li> <li>• Saudi Arabia</li> <li>• Spain</li> <li>• Sweden</li> <li>• Switzerland</li> <li>• <b>United Kingdom (suspended at present)</b></li> </ul> |
|--|--|

In very limited circumstances, a participating government may also sponsor a small number of developing country nationals.

### **UK Nationals**

The UK stopped sponsoring JPOs in December 2003 and will not recruit under the scheme in the foreseeable future. The explanation offered on DfID's website is as follows:

Increasingly DFID is moving towards longer term, more assured financing for UN organisations that allow them, in consultation with their governing bodies, to manage their human resource requirements.

That being said, both DFID & DEFRA (The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) do occasionally provide funding for UN posts. This funding will only be made available when such posts complement implementation strategies for programmes or projects that are directly supported by these departments.

## 7. Internships

### **What internships does the UN offer?**

The best place to go for a comprehensive overview is the Youth at the United Nations website [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth). The site lists over 50 UN agencies, programmes and affiliated bodies that run internship programmes and provides details on the nature of the internship, eligibility criteria and links if you wish to apply.

### **Internship at the UN headquarters in New York**

For the purposes of this guide, we have chosen to concentrate on the internship programme run at the UN headquarters in New York. The programme consists of three two-month periods: spring (mid-January to mid-March), summer (early June to early August) and autumn (mid-September to mid-November). The programme is full time and interns spend five days a week at the department or Office of the Secretariat that has selected them. Up to 200 young people are recruited in each session.

### **What to expect**

The internship programme aims to expose graduate and post-graduate students from diverse academic backgrounds to the work of the UN, and to provide the departments at the headquarters in New York with the assistance of specialists in various professional fields.

### **Am I eligible?**

To apply you should be enrolled in a degree-granting programme (i.e. Masters or PhD) in a graduate school and must be able to communicate fluently in either English or French.

### **When is the application deadline?**

The deadline for application will be approximately four months prior to the desired internship period.

### **When is the best time to go?**

Let's face it; any time is a good time to work at the UN. But if you are flexible about when you can join, try to apply for the autumn session (September-November). This is when the General Assembly and the General Debate begin, and is by far the most exciting time of year at the UN simply because of the number of heads of state and high-profile visitors.

### **Will I be paid?**

The internship is a fantastic experience, but it is unpaid, and the UN will not pay your expenses. You should budget for living expenses (including accommodation) of at least US\$2500 for the two months.

### **Can I stay for more than 2 months?**

Officially it's a two-month internship. However, it is possible to negotiate an extension and many interns work for the UN for between two to six months, either in the same department, or by spending a few months in different areas. It helps to be proactive and seek out opportunities, rather than waiting for them to come to you. Remember, your ability to extend your stay will depend on the conditions of your visa.

### **Is it possible to get a visa?**

It is usually fairly straightforward for UK citizens with an internship offer to get a visa to work in the US, although the process can take a few months and involves spending half a day at the US embassy in London on the day of your appointment. The visa required is usually a B1 – but check with the embassy at the time of application.  
[http://www.usembassy.org.uk/cons\\_new/faqs/faq\\_visa\\_niv.html#niv014](http://www.usembassy.org.uk/cons_new/faqs/faq_visa_niv.html#niv014)

### **What sort of work will it involve?**

This will really depend on your background, the department you are working in and the period during which you do your internship. Common tasks include drafting briefing notes, updating country profiles, undertaking research, writing for publications, or escorting press and visitors around the building.

For more information on the UNHQ internship, visit  
[www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/sds/internsh/index.html](http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/sds/internsh/index.html)

### **Other international internships**

Links to internship information at selected agencies are given below:

UNICEF: [http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/index\\_internship.html](http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/index_internship.html)

UNECE: [http://www.unece.org/oes/internships/internship\\_prog.htm](http://www.unece.org/oes/internships/internship_prog.htm)

UNESCO: [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=11716&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=11716&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

World Bank:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTHRJOBS/0,,contentMDK:20515785~menuPK:64262363~pagePK:64262408~piPK:64262191~theSitePK:1058433,00.html>

## 8. Volunteering

The United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) was created by the General Assembly in 1970 to serve as an operational partner in development cooperation at the request of member states. It reports to UNDP and works through UNDP's country offices around the world. The UNV website ([www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org)) states that the Millennium Development Goals are the overarching foundation supporting UNV's mission, and that voluntary action by people both in developed and developing countries is a vastly under-used resource that needs to be engaged.

In 2006, 7569 volunteers served in 134 countries, with the largest UNV operations taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sudan, India, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, Zambia, Burundi and Ethiopia.

### What to expect

The UNV programme involves a broad range of areas, including agriculture, health and education, social conditions, community development, vocational training, industry, transport, population and information technology.

Volunteers are divided into categories. The length of service, eligibility criteria and nature of work differs greatly between categories. Details for each category can be found via the UNV website, along with information on how to apply.

<b>International volunteers</b>	Serve in a country other than their own. As UNV specialises in recruiting volunteers for developing countries, nationals from developed countries can only apply for international assignments.
<b>International UNV specialists</b>	Serve in a country other than their own and are recruited for practical and specialised inputs to development or humanitarian programmes.
<b>International UNV field workers</b>	Serve in a country other than their own but come from the same continent. They normally have a technical diploma and several years of experience with grass-roots groups or organisations in their own country
<b>National volunteers</b>	Serve in their own country
<b>National UNV specialists</b>	Serve in their own country. They have formal qualifications and experience of working with local governments, NGOs and community-based organisations. They support national capacity building initiatives, facilitate networking and change.
<b>National UNV field workers</b>	Serve in their own country. They usually have a vocational diploma and have experience in supporting self-help groups. They assist in building the capacities of local community organisations and support grass-roots initiatives.
<b>UNISTAR (UN International Short-Term Advisory Resources)</b>	International executives and technical experts who offer their knowledge to support private and public sector development.
<b>TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals)</b>	Professionals living outside their homeland who return there for short periods to assist academic, research, public or industrial bodies.

### **Eligibility**

Although the criteria are specific to the type of volunteer assignment, there are basic guidelines that apply to the type of service most likely to be sought by young professionals:

- A university degree or higher technical diplomas
- Several years of relevant working experience
- At least age 25 (no maximum age limit)
- Good working knowledge in at least one of the three working UN languages: English, French and Spanish
- Strong commitment to values and principles of volunteerism
- Ability to work in a multi-cultural environment
- Ability to adjust in difficult living conditions
- Strong interpersonal and organisational skills
- Prior volunteering and/or working experience in a developing country is an asset

### **Will I be paid?**

As the word 'volunteer' implies, there is no salary. However, the programme will provide you with the following:

- Settling-in-Grant calculated on the duration of assignment which is paid at the beginning of the assignment
- Volunteer Living Allowance (VLA) intended to cover basic living expenses, which is paid each month
- Travel on appointment and at the end of assignment, if different than home location
- Life, health and permanent disability insurance
- Annual leave
- Resettlement allowance calculated based on the duration of assignment which is paid upon satisfactory completion of the assignment.

### **Other volunteering opportunities**

The UNV programme recruits volunteers for assignments through the UN system, including agencies such as UNICEF, for example. If you want to volunteer for a particular agency, it is best to approach them directly and enquire about possible opportunities.

It is also possible to undertake volunteer work within the UN headquarters in New York, where volunteers are generally given administrative tasks. There is no formal programme or scheme to apply for such positions, but if you are interested, you should contact the relevant department directly and enquire about possible opportunities.

## 9. Further information

The UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs 'A Guide to a Career with the United Nations' (available via the search option on [www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org)) is the best place to start. It includes information on the UN's role, the different departments, programmes and organisations within the UN system, as well as vital career information. However, information is constantly updated so don't take any addresses or specific information pertaining to deadlines, for example, as gospel.

The *Youth at the United Nations* website [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth) is the most useful source in terms of internships and it provides links to the relevant pages for over 50 agencies, funds and programmes.

**For job vacancies and general employment information, visit:**

UN - [www.un.org/Depts/OHRM.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM.htm)

UNDP - [www.undp.org/toppages/undpjobs.htm](http://www.undp.org/toppages/undpjobs.htm)

UNICEF - [www.unicef.org/employ.htm](http://www.unicef.org/employ.htm)

The UN also occasionally advertises vacancies in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Economist* and the *Financial Times*.

**For information on graduate/young professional employment programmes with UN agencies and funds, visit:**

UNDP - [www.undp.org/ohr/lead](http://www.undp.org/ohr/lead)

World Bank -

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTHRJOBS/0,,contentMDK:20519630~menuPK:64262363~pagePK:64262408~piPK:64262191~theSitePK:1058433,00.html>

UNESCO - [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=11714&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=11714&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

UNICEF - [http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/index\\_ypp.html](http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/index_ypp.html)

### **Most importantly...**

Join the **Young Professionals Network** today! The Young Professionals Network (YPN) is a collaboration of young professionals with an interest – whether personal or professional – in peace, justice and sustainable development. We currently have over 1,500 members in the London area, and the Network is actively expanding to other regions of the UK.

It's free to join – simply join the mailing list to receive the monthly newsletter (which includes careers advice and job vacancies) and be informed about upcoming events: [www.una.org.uk/ypn](http://www.una.org.uk/ypn)