Where do English majors go?

According to the 2014 Graduating Student Survey (with a 47.1% response rate for undergraduates in the English department):

- 66.7% of graduates were employed or going to grad school.
  - 47.9% were employed
  - 18.8% had secure plans to attend grad school

Here are some examples of organizations that hired Columbia English majors in recent years:

BAREL
Writers House
Gorkana
Google
macmillan education
IEL Institute for Educational Leadership
Seward & Kissel LLP
Bloomberg
Forbes
Scholastic
The Library of Congress
CLINIQUE
TEACH FOR AMERICA

What jobs do English majors do?

A degree in English provides knowledge and skills relevant to a wide variety of jobs across the career spectrum, including:

- **Writing/Editing**: Creative Writing, Journalism, Freelance Writing, Technical Writing, Science Writing
- **Publishing**: Editing, Advertising, Sales, Circulation, Production, Publicity, Marketing, Promotion
- **Education**: Teaching, Administration, Higher Education Administration, Information/Library Science, Non-classroom Teaching, English as a Second Language (ESL), Research
Advertising: Creative Services, Account Management, Media, Account Planning, Production
Public Relations: Account Coordination, Writing/Editing, Media Relations, Social Media, Account Management, Fundraising, Research
Law: Prosecution, Defense, Contractual, Corporate, Nonprofit or Public Interest, Government, Mediation, Lobbying

Use CCE’s Industry Exploration webpages to learn more about these, and other fields.

What do employers want?

Most of the skills/qualities sought by employers are transferrable and/or soft skills that students can gain through classes, extracurricular activities, internships, volunteer experiences, or part time jobs including:

1. Ability to work in a team structure
2. Ability to make decisions and solve problems
3. Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization
4. Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work
5. Ability to obtain and process information
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. Technical knowledge related to the job
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell or influence others

Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2015 Job Outlook

Your major can definitely demonstrate relevant coursework and knowledge to a prospective employer, but your studies aren’t the only aspect of your experience that employers are evaluating. They select people who they believe can do the job (have the right skills), want the job (have demonstrated an interest in the field) and are a personality fit for the team and organization.

What value do English majors bring?

According to the English department at Columbia, the English curriculum helps you to develop the ability to:

- Think critically and objectively
- Write clearly and effectively across genres
- Read closely and imaginatively
- Organize material with attention to detail and a pleasing style
- Analyze texts for both grammatical and content accuracy
- Develop creative solutions to unique situations
- Synthesize large amounts of information into a coherent structure
- Draw connections between seemingly disparate sources of information

What if I’m an international student?

For international students at Columbia under student visas, selecting your major can play a significant role if you plan to work in the US after completion of your degree. Optional Practical Training is a work authorization that allows an international student to work in a job directly related to the student’s major area of study either before or after degree completion. Employer sponsored H1B Visas also have similar strict requirements. Students with more questions about this should visit the International Student & Scholars Office (ISSO) and view CCE’s International Students webpage at careereducation.columbia.edu/students/International-Students.