Where do Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) majors go?

According to the 2014 Graduating Student Survey (with a 52.4% response rate for undergraduates in the MESAAS department):

- 45.5% of graduates were employed or going to graduate school.
  - 36.4% were employed
  - 9.1% had secure plans to attend grad school

Here are some examples of organizations that have hired Columbia Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) majors in recent years:

What jobs do Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) majors do?

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

- **Education**: Higher Education, Teaching, Research, Student Affairs Administration, Community Education, Information/Library Science
- **Advocacy**: Domestic and International Advocacy, Humanitarian Services, Policy Development, Program Administration, Volunteer Coordination, Grant Writing, Fundraising/Development
- **Human Services**: Counseling, Psychotherapy, Mental Health Services, Case Management, Programming, Community Relations and Outreach, Rehabilitation, Vocational Training, Crisis Services
• **Law and Politics**: Law, Corporate Practice, Public Interest Law, Civil Law, Lobbying, Government Relations, Elected or Appointed Leadership, Public Policy, Intelligence, Campaign Management, Special Interests Advocacy

• **Media and The Arts**: Journalism, Creative Writing, Freelance Writing, Copy Writing, Editing, Research and Analysis, Broadcasting, Media Sales, Museum Work, Arts Programming, Art Sales, Exhibition Design

Use CCE’s [Industry Exploration](mailto:careereducation.columbia.edu) 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 Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) majors bring?**

According to the Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies department at Columbia, the MESAAS curriculum helps you to develop the following skills:

- Language expertise: ability to study a cultural field through its own texts
- Analytical skills: ability to think and write about complex cultural formations
- Research skills
- Ability to think critically
- Verbal and written communication skills
- Collaboration and teamwork skills

**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.