



Job-Search Guide for International Students

INTRODUCTION

As the world becomes smaller with the globalization of markets, there are an increasing number of international students on campuses throughout the U.S. today. International students seeking employment in the U.S. have unique and different challenges. This guide has been developed to provide assistance and advice to international students regarding the job-search process.

There are two major obstacles international students may face at the outset of the job search. The first is employment restrictions imposed by U.S. immigration regulations; the second is cultural differences that may affect a student's ability to successfully present his or her qualifications to an employer. It is important for you to be aware of these difficulties and to be prepared to deal with them as best you can. To insure that you have the proper employment authorization from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), contact the Office of International Education at 529-2512.

There are some specific strategies you can utilize as you prepare for the job search, whether you plan to remain in the U.S. or return to your home country.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The first step in a successful job search is an honest, thorough evaluation of your values, your interests, your personal and financial needs, and your short- and long-term goals. As an international student, you should be aware that the goals you brought with you to the U.S. might have changed after residing here. You should be able to clearly articulate your career goals to an employer, and this can be achieved through a thorough self-assessment. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- » What did I hope to gain from study in the U.S.? How have these goals changed?
- » What are my short- and long-term career goals?
- » Am I geographically restricted for any reason?
- » Are finances a consideration?

- » How do my personal needs (e.g., family considerations) fit in with my goals?

Most individuals benefit from seeking assistance with the self-assessment process. This assistance is readily available, in various forms, through Career Services in Hoyt Hall.

GENERAL JOB SEARCH TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

There are more jobs in the U.S. open to international students in the technical fields: computer science, IT, and engineering. Jobs in accounting are also increasing in demand. However, when the U.S. economy is down, it is important to note that it is more difficult for F-1 students to find employment in the U.S.

If you are not able to find employment in the U.S., seeking a job with an international company may be an excellent back-up. Since you have studied abroad, are multi-lingual and have an excellent degree, you are very marketable to international companies who are looking for many of the skills, experience, and knowledge you have acquired in the U.S.

- » Some of the most marketable skills you have come from being an international student in the U.S. Being an international student requires determination, resourcefulness, flexibility, intercultural competency, the ability to navigate through a different social and cultural system, etc. Market these skills in your resume/cover letter and during your interviews!
- » Broaden your job search. In other words, consider a job that is related to your major but not your dream career position. For example, if you have an Information Technology degree and want to do web development, consider other positions in IT.
- » Develop an excellent American resume. Use the resources available to you such as Career Services and the Howe Writing Center to help you look your best on paper.

RESUME/COVER LETTER

An American resume and resume format may differ from resume/resume formats found in other countries. It is important to be aware of these differences to ensure that your resume is specific to the U.S.

The following are some general differences between U.S. and International resumes:

- » U.S.: A “resume” is a completely different document than a “CV.” A CV in the U.S. is used primarily when applying for academic, research, and scientific positions, and for fellowships and grants.
- » International: Typically the terms “resume and “CV” refer to the same documents.
- » U.S.: A resume is concise (typically one page) and only lists jobs, educational skills, and accomplishments that are RELEVANT to the specific job.
- » International: A resume is usually longer (sometimes two or more pages) and explains all academic and formal work experience, including completion of military service (if applicable).
- » U.S.: The resume may list high school, but typically highlights education at the college and graduate/professional levels.
- » International: May begin with secondary school and list all education thereafter. Reputation of the secondary school may be of importance.
- » U.S.: In the U.S., a resume is designed to exhibit and show-off your potential, skills, knowledge, and experience. The tone is typically assertive and firm and is used to present to the employer that YOU are the BEST person for the job.
- » International: Oftentimes in societies that value social hierarchy, modesty and respectfulness are important components of the tone of the resume.
- » U.S.: A resume does NOT include personal information such as a personal photo, age, health, marital status, race, or religion.
- » International: Personal photos are oftentimes included with a resume along with other personal information.

The following are resume tips for international students seeking U.S. employment:

- » Do not list English as a language skill when applying for a job in an English-speaking country.
- » Do not include TOEFL scores.
- » Do not include your visa status.
- » Do not list your international permanent address/phone on your U.S. Resume.
- » Emphasize your accomplishments, not just experience.
- » Highlight your pertinent experience at home, not just in the U.S..
- » Provide a frame of reference for international companies/schools so that U.S. employers become familiar with the company/school you are listing on your Resume. For example,
 - › second largest technology manufacturer in Europe
 - › top five universities in China
 - › MIT of Turkey
 - › Nigerian version of McDonalds
- » Include fluency in languages.
- » Check your spelling, grammar, and use of language. Use Career Services and the Howe Writing Center as resources to review!

The staff at Career Services can assist you in preparing a resume. A resume for employment in the U.S. is an advertisement for you in terms of your abilities, accomplishments, and future capabilities. For all intents and purposes, it will be your chief marketing tool in your job-search campaign.

An effective resume will make a prospective employer want to meet you in person to further discuss your potential value to his or her organization. Above all, your resume should be honest, positive, concise, and easy to read. For more information about preparing your resume, please refer to the *Resume Preparation* guide available in the Career Services Office or via our website.

A cover letter always accompanies a resume when applying for jobs. Throughout the course of your job search, you will be in constant contact with prospective employers. You will be evaluated on your ability to present yourself as a good communicator who is capable of contributing your skills to an employing organization.

Presenting yourself effectively “on paper” is an important and ongoing process during the job search. While this is accomplished in part with a well-written resume, a variety of correspondence is also necessary in most job-search campaigns. Whether you are asking for an interview or accepting a job offer, appropriate and effective correspondence will significantly enhance the likelihood of success in your job-search efforts. For more information about cover letters, please refer to the *Cover Letters and Other Job-Search Correspondence* guide also available in our office (200 Hoyt Hall) or via our website.

THE INTERVIEW

As an international student, you may face unique challenges during a U.S. job interview. Some of these challenges may include:

- » Differences in cultural attitudes and behaviors.
- » Language fluency.
- » Contextualizing relevant aspects of your background at home that may be unfamiliar to the employer.
- » Uncertainty about when and how to present your visa status to the employer.

Differences in Cultural Attitudes and Behaviors

Culture plays a strong role on how individuals perceive themselves, situations and each other. During a job interview, for example, culture has an impact on what employers value as appropriate and desirable behavior. To prepare for a job interview in the U.S., it is important to be aware of the cultural nuances that may be at play during your verbal and non-verbal communication with the employer. In the U.S.:

- » Direct eye contact and firm hand shake relay confidence and interest
- » Thinking “quick on your feet” conveys competence and dynamism
- » High value is placed on ability to articulate answers quickly and eloquently
- » High value is placed on informational aspect of communication (not relational-establishing relationship is secondary to relaying information)

- » High value is placed on self-reliance (rather than on group/community affiliation)
- » High value is placed on individual achievement: taking credit for making positive changes, solving problems, or developing new initiatives (rather than individual modesty)
- » Long periods of silence are uncommon, and may make the interviewer uncomfortable.

Language Fluency

The best way to tackle limited language fluency during the job interview is to practice your English writing, speaking and listening skills. Of particular importance during the interview are your speaking and listening skills. To practice these skills you need to get involved in as many opportunities to practice your English as possible. Getting involved in student organizations, intramural sports, and volunteering are some of the many ways to gain confidence with your English language fluency.

Selling Yourself

As an international student, it is important that you sell your unique strengths during the interview. Some of these strengths may include:

- » Your fluency in multiple languages
- » Global/intercultural competence
- » Adaptability and flexibility
- » Resourcefulness
- » Willingness and ability to easily relocate (many international students do not have family or other obligations tying them down to a geographic area)

The Visa Question

What information can/can't the employer legally ask?

A. While it is illegal for an employer to ask you your country of origin, race, or ethnicity, an interviewer CAN legally ask you whether you are on an F-1 or J-1 visa, and CAN inquire about your work authorization in the U.S. So, while an employer is not legally allowed to ask you “Where are you from?”, it is perfectly legal to be asked a question like, “Are you an international student? What visa category are you in? Are you eligible to legally work in the U.S.?”

How should I answer the visa question?

A. You should answer the question in an honest, direct, clear, concise and confident manner. If you are nervous or unsure, the employer will pick up on these signals and may not be able to stay focused on your skills and qualifications. Avoid excessive detail. This may give the impression that hiring you will be too complicated and confusing. Do not let your visa status be the focus of the interview. Keep the focus of the interview on you. Many American employers do not have in-depth and updated knowledge of visa regulations. Therefore, it is imperative that you know your work permission guidelines and are able to discuss them confidently with the employer during the interview.

What kind of information should I know and where can I get it?

A. It is important that you meet with an International Student Advisor at OIE before you begin your job search to discuss your eligibility and conditions for employment in the U.S. Be prepared to explain the following:

- » What kind of visa category you currently hold
- » What kind of work authorization you qualify for
- » The duration of your work authorization
- » The processes involved in legally hiring you with your work authorization
- » The conditions of employment under your work authorization
- » Your employer's options after your work authorization expires

Knowledge is power: if you know your stuff, it will show and you will have no problem answering visa-related questions.

What if the question wasn't asked? Should I bring it up myself?

A. Keep in mind that you are NOT required to bring up the topic if the employer has not asked you about your visa status. Though introducing the issue is a personal choice, by bringing up the topic yourself, you are showing the employer that you are motivated to get the job and that you are knowledgeable and ready to assist them with the procedures involved. For example, if the interview is coming to a close and the visa issue has not been mentioned yet, it may be a good idea to bring it up casually. You can say: *"I would like*

to mention that I am on a student visa and will need to briefly discuss my legal employment with you if I am hired. My international student advisor has explained my legal options and the procedures that exist for my lawful employment."

TYPES OF WORK AUTHORIZATION

Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training, also commonly referred to as OPT, refers to temporary employment for practical training directly related to a student's major area of study. Specifically, OPT is a benefit available to students who have been in full time F-1 status for one academic year. OPT provides students with a total of 12 months of work authorization that can be used either part-time (20 hrs/wk) during school year or full-time during the summer months and/or after completion of studies. F-1 students get 12 months of OPT after each degree level (Bachelor's, Master's & Ph.D). No job offer is required for post-completion OPT and an application fee is required. To learn more about OPT please speak to an International Student Advisor.

Curricular Practical Training

Curricular Practical Training, also commonly referred to as CPT, refers to temporary employment for practical training that is directly integrated in the curriculum of the student's major area of study. Therefore, CPT can be authorized only if a student is earning academic credit for the employment or if it is required for the degree. Students must be in full-time F-1 status for one full academic year before being eligible to apply. A job offer is required for CPT and no application fee is required. To learn more about CPT please speak to an International Student Advisor.

The H-1B Visa

It is important that you navigate your job search with knowledge about how your immigration status will impact your search. The more knowledgeable you are about your

visa status and the options that are available to you, the more comfortably you will navigate through the process.

Each year the U.S. grants 65,000 H1-B visas to foreign nationals with at least a U.S. Bachelor's Degree or foreign equivalent. (20,000 additional visas are allotted for advanced degree candidates.) H1-B visas must be sponsored by the employer you are working for (or will be hired to work for) and ends when you terminate employment with that company.

In General:

- » The employer must petition the government for the H1-B visa.
- » The visas application must be submitted to the Labor Department for approval.
- » A lawyer usually handles the paperwork and process.
- » **The employer has to pay the fees.**

Some employers may not want to sponsor H-1B visas for the following reasons:

- » Employers may be unfamiliar with the process and know that hiring an American is much easier. Therefore it helps if the international candidate understands the process and can explain the steps in detail.
- » Employers may not want to pay the fees associated with H-1B petition.
- » Fear that the international student will sooner or later want to return to the home country. Training costs employers. (In big companies, the hiring and training of one employee costs upwards of \$10,000.)
- » Lack of top language skills. Many employers expect employees to have excellent communication skills. Even though international students can speak and write English, it is often not at the standard that employers desire.
- » Some employers feel that by issuing H1-B visas, they are depriving Americans of positions. Therefore the international student must be able to explain that the government allows around 65,000 H1-B visa plus 20,000 extra for graduate students each year and that if a visa is not issued to you, it will go to another international student for another company.
- » Check the Office of International Education website for more information on immigration and visas [MiamiOH.edu/internationalprograms/current.php].

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

After you have prepared your resume and cover letter, it is time to identify appropriate employers. Be aware that there are some employers who are interested in hiring international students whether for a practical training experience or full-time employment, and there are others who are not.

According to the Immigration Reform Control Act of 1986, employers must be willing to interview and consider for hire permanent residents, temporary residents, refugees and individuals in the U.S. under political asylum. Any question or criterion that would exclude any of these groups is prohibited. However, employers are permitted to specify that they will not consider any individuals with a non-immigrant visa (i.e., F1 or J1) who are eligible to work only for practical training purposes. This creates a challenge for international students as they attempt to identify employers who may be interested in hiring them. How do you go about identifying employers who are willing to consider you for practical training and/or full-time employment? Here are several strategies we suggest:

Going Global

Going Global is a provider of both country-specific and USA city-specific career and employment information. Going Global's unlimited access subscription database features 30 Country Career Guides, 41 USA City Career guides, corporate profiles and more than 500,000 internship and job listings within the USA and around the world.

Both the Going Global Country Career Guides and the USA City Career Guides provide professional advice and insider tips on such topics as:

- » Job search tools - online and face-to-face resources
- » Employment trends in major industries - learn more about growing industry areas and focus your job or internship search!
- » Executive recruiters and staffing agency contacts - great contacts for students and alumni/

professional job seekers

- » Work permit regulations - clearly explains the important details for international students and professional job seekers
- » Salary ranges and cost of living data - take the guesswork out of planning for career moves and relocations
- » Professional and social networking groups - get a head start on making connections for career development
- » Resume/CV writing guidelines
- » Interviewing and cultural advice

Each Career Guide contains more than 500 employment resources, all with detailed explanations and hot links directly to the latest information. All USA City Career Guides include links to H-1B visa employers for every state!

You may access Going Global on the Career Services website [www.MiamiOH.edu/careers], then go to Student Home page and scroll down on the far right side until you come to the Going Global access site.

Companies/Organizations that Have a Relationship with Your Home Country

Companies/organizations that have an existing relationship with your home country may be particularly interested in hiring you. There are two excellent resources available to you in our Career Resource Center that will help you identify these potential employers. They are the *Directory of American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries* and the *Directory of Foreign Firms Operating in the U.S.* You can ask our Career Resource Career Assistants to assist you in locating these directories.

Local Chambers of Commerce

It is important to realize that there may be job opportunities for you in medium- to smaller-sized companies that have established trade relationships with various countries. Most major cities now have companies that are establishing trade relationships with foreign countries. Contact local chambers of commerce and ask about their trade relationships with other countries.

On-Campus Interviewing Program

As mentioned earlier, employers have the right to specify whether or not they will interview international students on an F1 or J1 visa. We recommend that you correspond directly with employers who recruit at Miami. We have found that although an employer may tell us that they are not interested in interviewing international students on campus, there are times employers will grant interviews to international students who take the initiative to make direct contact.

International Companies

Some of the best employment prospects for international students may be with international companies. International students are great assets to global organizations desiring language skills, respect for diversity, and knowledge of overseas economies.

Workshops and Career Fairs

Career Services sponsors a wide variety of workshops that can help acquaint you further with the American perspective on the job-search process. In addition to workshops on resume writing, interviewing techniques, and job-search strategies, Career Services sponsors a career fair in September and an internship & career expo in February which offer you the opportunity to obtain career advice and explore career opportunities with employers representing business, industry, government and public service. You can also take advantage of our "mock interview" service to improve your interviewing skills. All you need to do is call and make an appointment.

Networking

You probably have heard something about "networking" as a job-search strategy. In the U.S., the primary way people get professional positions is through networking. Networking involves informing as many people as possible that you are looking for a job. You can begin the networking process by meeting with your foreign student advisor, professors, and

friends. They may be aware of job openings for which you may be eligible or know of organizations interested in hiring international students. Remember to provide your contacts with a copy of your resume so they know what you are looking for and what experience and background you have. If they have contacts in any organizations for which you may be interested in working, ask for their permission to contact these individuals using their name. They might also have lists of international students or alumni working temporarily or permanently in the U.S. or alumni who have found employment in their home country. Don't forget about people in your home country who may be of assistance to you.

To assist you with building your professional network, you will want to join LinkedIn. LinkedIn is the leading professional network on the web where you can connect with classmates, faculty, staff and industry professionals and find new opportunities for internships and full time positions. To learn more about LinkedIn and how to create your profile please visit [www.MiamiOH.edu/careers/students/job_search/linkedin.shtml].

Informational Interviews

Informational interviewing is a form of networking and is another technique that can help you establish further contacts. Informational interviewing involves talking with individuals in your field to gain first-hand career information and advice about the job-search process. The informational interview is never used to ask for a job, but rather is a means to gain helpful information and develop contacts with other individuals in your field. For more information on informational interviewing, refer to the Job-Search Strategies guide available in our Career Resource Center or via our website.

Employment Agencies

Be wary of any employment agency that promises you the job of your dreams in an American company for which you always wanted to work. Any agency that charges you a fee to help you identify job opportunities should be

avoided. There are many organizations that prey upon the vulnerability of international students – BE CAUTIOUS. Those agencies that are fee-paid, that is, the company pays the agency to find qualified individuals for jobs, are the better choice. Although there may be exceptions, normally employment agencies are of little help to inexperienced graduates seeking entry-level positions.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Any job search, whether it be that of an American or an international student, is time-consuming and, at times, frustrating. However, by following the strategies outlined in this guide and the other publications we have suggested, your job search will be more productive. Keep an open mind and utilize all the resources available to you. Here are some additional tips:

Market Yourself Positively

It is very important for international students to turn employers' objections into positives. By virtue of living and studying abroad, international students demonstrate tenacity and resourcefulness. Tell employers about the challenges you faced in studying abroad and how you overcame them. You should also be prepared to convince employers that hiring you offers more advantages than disadvantages.

Consider an Internship

According to one recent report, more than 53 percent of international survey respondents received a job offer from the sponsoring American company after completing an internship with the company. Therefore, internships can sometimes lead to full-time employment. Since internships usually count as Optional Practical Training (OPT) time, please check with the Office of International Education before pursuing an internship to determine whether an internship is right for you. Students most often seek internships for the summer prior to graduation.

Explore Occupations in Need of International Students

in Need of International Students

According to a study conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE Research: Job Outlook 2010), employers who plan to hire international students focus on graduates with degrees in electrical engineering, computer science, chemistry, chemical engineering, and business administration/management. Of the employers who participated in the NACE study, manufacturers expressed the highest interest in hiring international students (28.1%), followed closely by service-sector employers (21.4%) and government/nonprofit employers (16%). These statistics suggest that **international students who wish to work several years in the United States would be wise to study technical subjects in order to increase their chance for employment.**

Possible sources about occupations, employers, and companies with a history of H1-B sponsorship include [[ForeignMBA.com](#)]and [[H1VisaJobs.com](#)]. Registration and payment of a fee may be required to access certain parts of these sites.

Carefully Approach the Topic of H1-B Visas with Employers

Many employers are intimidated by the U.S. immigration process and are reluctant to sponsor H1-B visas, or simply have a policy

against it. Do not begin an employment interview or letter with an inquiry regarding H1-B sponsorship. Discussions about H1-B sponsorship should come later, either when the employer brings it up or when you are offered the position. Your first task in an interview is to convince the employer of your suitability for the job. Only later, when the employer is close to making, or has made an offer, should you raise the H1-B sponsorship issue.

Be Flexible

You may need to expand your job search by considering jobs outside your desired career field. For example, a major who would like work in Web development may want to search for jobs in Web development as well as other areas of information technology/computer science.

NEED HELP?

If you would like individual assistance, do not hesitate to schedule an appointment with a staff member at Career Services by calling 529-3831. Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For additional information about Career Services and other pertinent websites, please refer to our website [[www.MiamiOH.edu/careers](#)]. For assistance in using the website, check with the Career Assistants in 205 Hoyt Hall.

Titles in the Career Development Series include:

A Career Guide for Liberal Arts Students

Careers in Nonprofit Organizations

Cover Letters & Other Job-Search Correspondence

Employment Guide for Teacher Candidates

The Graduate School Option

Interviewing

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Your Job Search

A Job-Search Guide for International Students

Job-Search Strategies

Resume Preparation

To obtain any of the titles listed in the Career Development Series, please visit
[\[MiamiOH.edu/careers/students/cds\]](http://MiamiOH.edu/careers/students/cds) or stop in Career Services.



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