

# University of Illinois at Chicago Office of Career Services

## International Student Career Resource Guide



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## CAREER SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Welcome to a guide tailored for you and other international students studying at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The resource guide seeks to answer questions you might have and provide assistance for all of your career development needs as you prepare to work in the U.S. or abroad.

The Office of Career Services offers a number of services for all students of the university. Please register with our office and make use of the online system at [UICcareers.com](http://UICcareers.com). Engage in the job search process by participating in our recruitment events and coming to our office early and often.

Services:

- Drop-In Advising
- Individual Career Counseling
- Videotaped Mock Interviews
- On-campus Interviews
- Resume Services
- SIGI-3
- Webinars
- Resources for Career Exploration and Planning
- Resources for Graduate School Exploration

### Resumes vs. Curriculum Vitae (CVs): What's the difference?

#### What is a resume?

A resume is a statement and a marketing tool tailored to your career goals with the objective of getting you an interview. Think of your resume as your sales pitch.

#### How is it different from a CV?

A resume is concise marketing document, not a laundry list of every activity you have engaged in. It should not include your TOEFL score, a photograph, immigration status, visa status, age, height/weight, hometown/home country, marital status, race/ethnicity, religion or your personal interests/hobbies. It is illegal in the U.S. for a potential employer to ask about your personal life, so don't include anything that can get them in trouble. A CV is a much more comprehensive document that would include all your teaching, research, and publications. In the US a CV is used primarily in academic environments.

**The basics of a resume:**

- Length (1-2 pages)
- Paper (white or off white, high quality)
- Font (nothing distracting; 10-12 point, black)
- Margins (0.75" to 1")
- Category Headings (slightly larger and/or bold)
- Printing (use a good quality printer)
- Templates (not recommended)

Aim for visual appeal and a layout that makes it easy for the reader to get the most relevant information.

Be consistent in your layout and job descriptions (e.g. dates for education, work history, etc. all formatted in the same place throughout your resume)

Use a mixture of powerful action words to describe experiences you have had in the past (e.g. coordinated, organized, led).

Include awards you have won for academics, work, or campus/community involvements.

See our Resume section on the website for much more information.

**Cover Letters**

Most professional U.S. job or internships applications will require a cover letter. Regardless of whether it is required, you should always accompany your resume with a well-written cover letter. It should have the same heading or letterhead as your resume.

U.S. cover letters will be customized specifically to each employer you submit an application. When applying for each job or internship, be sure to create a new letter for each, including only information that is pertinent to the qualifications that the employer is looking for in a candidate.

While the cover letter is your chance to portray yourself effectively on paper, make sure that you are a strong communicator in other instances with the potential employer. This includes when you follow up about a job application, asking for an interview or accepting a job offer. Doing this raises your chance of success in your job search.

Take the chance to focus on your multi-cultural background, including work and educational experience, as well as your language skills.

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Your cover letter should be free of spelling and grammatical errors. After drafting your cover letter bring it to Office of Career Services for a review.

See our Cover Letter section on the website for much more information.

## Tips for Being Successful in the Internship/Job Search

- 1) Research companies and organizations that have a relationship with your home country
- 2) As a senior, complete a Career Preparation Seminar in the Fall or Spring semesters to register yourself for UIC's On-Campus Interviewing Program
- 3) Apply for positions at International companies to increase your chances of being able to find work
- 4) Attend workshops and career fairs hosted by UIC's Office of Career Services
- 5) Network, network, network!
- 6) Find UIC alums or people who are working in the field that you want to, and ask if they would give you some time for an informational interview

## American Work Culture

### **Business Dress**

Both men and women should think conservatively for business dress. Women should wear business suits, pantsuits, and/or dresses. Men should wear a business suit. Wear colors that don't attract attention to you in a negative way. Colors like gray, black and blue are typical dress colors for work.

### **Communication**

Americans are direct when they communicate. Reason and direct thinking are valued and it is expected that employees speak in a straightforward manner. If you are from a culture that is subtle in communication style, do your best to embrace the direct method of communication. When speaking or communicating via email, make your points quickly. Depending on the business, Americans use telephones to conduct meetings that might take place face-to-face in other countries/cultures.

**Work Hours**

A typical work week is 40 hours, Monday through Friday, beginning at 8:00 am each day and ending at 5:00 pm. Some businesses and jobs involve longer hours, including working weekends.

Compared to your home country, American work culture may seem harder. Most American workers typically get only two weeks of paid holiday a year. There may be less paid sick days and maternity leave than your home country.

**Business Meetings**

Meetings are a way for employees to collaborate on work and reach a consensus on important decisions that are made within a business, office, or department. Meetings with agendas follow a protocol, typically reviewing the agenda from the previous meeting as well as discussing ongoing business within the unit.

If you are attending a meeting where you must make a presentation, focus on being direct and to the point. Using tools like PowerPoint and Prezi can be effective visual aids. When making important points, use statistics and hard data as a means to provide evidence for problems that exist and solutions that could be implemented.

**Qualifying to Work in the U.S.**

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) are the two most common ways for international students to gain relevant experience in their field of study.

**Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

CPT allows F-1 status students to gain experience in their field of study before graduating. You cannot qualify for CPT unless you have completed one full academic year in the United States as a full-time student. Any CPT in the United States pursued by an F-1 student must be eligible for and listed on the current I-20 as CPT before employment begins.

*Requirements for Employment*

One of the following conditions must be met in order for the employment to qualify for CPT

- It must fulfill a required internship in the academic program, OR
- It must fulfill the requirements for a course or independent study in the academic program of at least 1 credit hour, OR
- If working on a thesis or final project, the work must contribute “materially and substantially” to that project.

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### *Examples of acceptable CPT*

- A summer internship requiring professional work contributions at a well-established company or organization,
- Work with a software company where the results are used to complete a project for a specific information systems course,
- Research at a financial institution with the intent of using the data collected as the basis for a thesis project.

Contact the Office of International Services for more information on the application process.

### **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

OPT allows F-1 student to work temporarily, in order to apply classroom learning to a practical work experience off campus. F-1 students are eligible to use some or all of the 12 months of OPT during enrollment, or save it for use after completion of your studies. Graduate students who have completed coursework and are working on a thesis or dissertation may begin full-time OPT before completion of studies.

Contact the Office of International Services for more information on the application process. The Office of International Services will be familiar with the regulations involving your Visa. They can provide current information regarding Visa regulations and work permission stipulations.

### **International Student Web Resources**

[H1VisaJobs.com](http://H1VisaJobs.com) – Their online database contains thousands of companies all across the United States that have filed H-1B paperwork with the U.S. government for sponsoring international professionals.

[U.S. Department of Labor's Certification Data Disclosure](#) (Click on FLC Case Data) This website helps you find out which companies have applied for H-1B visas for one or more new employees within the last couple of years. This site will shed light on which employers are open to hiring international employees. You can search by year, employer and state.

[International Affairs Resources](#) - This is an internet directory with resources, contacts, and other information relevant to international affairs. There are also career related resources and new positions that are posted on this site.

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**The Foreign MBA** - This website is an important resource for foreign MBAs. This site includes an employer listing of those who have a history of hiring foreign MBAs as well as a guide for how to land a job in the U.S.

**International Student** – This website seeks to help international students better understand the American immigration authorities and educational system. Additional information is provided on studying abroad and finding low cost products and services needed while studying in the U.S.

**Foreign Embassies of Washington D.C.** - Provides information on each of the foreign embassies in Washington D.C., with links to each countries Visa process.

**Idealist** – Thousands of nonprofit and community organizations listed on their website. Search or browse by name, location, or mission. It helps to connect people, organizations, and resources to build a better world. Find job opportunities or chances to volunteer.

**Job Choices** - An online magazine that shares resume samples, interview tips, what employers want, and how to market yourself.

**U.S. Immigration Support** - An online guide to U.S. Visas, green cards, and path to citizenship

**IStudentCity** , [http://www.istudentcity.com/career/career\\_placement.asp](http://www.istudentcity.com/career/career_placement.asp) – A site for international students for the entire job search process. The free career placement service is designed to meet the special needs of international students and find the best employer possible for you.

**Monster Work Abroad**, - This site provides jobs postings for Europe, North America, Middle East, and Asia.

**Hobson's Publishing Inc.** – A publishing company that produces casebooks profiling major employers and career opportunities around the world. The site contains a searchable jobs database, a listing of international job fairs, and corporate profiles.