

Advice for Students Pursuing Careers in International Law

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JOB HUNTING IN AN INTERNATIONAL ARENA

The search for an international position takes perseverance and organization and will require all of the research and networking skills a student can muster. To succeed a student must be patient, painstakingly follow every opportunity, and keep a positive frame of mind. Here are a few tips:

- Learn everything you can about the customs, geography, etc. of the country or global region in which you are interested. You must be sensitive to the legal structure and to social and political norms. The Department of State (www.state.gov/travel) provides travel warnings, information about living abroad, visas, exchange rates, health precautions, etc. Use it as a starting point only and do broader research.
- Look for internships in countries where you might want to work after law school. If the position is unpaid, consider working for credit or find your own funding (including loans). Depending on the country, the cost of living may be very low and the organization may even be able to help with expenses such as housing. The international job market is very competitive—do not pass up a good opportunity because it is unpaid.
- Networking skills are particularly valuable in international law. Take advantage of every opportunity to make a contact and never lose track of the ones you make! Ask your career services office for referrals to alumni who might be helpful.
- Summer abroad programs featuring comparative legal systems and analysis will help you better understand the civil law system of countries where you might want to work after graduation.
- Departments of public information or reporting and analysis, although not primarily legal, will give you the chance to learn a lot, meet the people you need to meet, and perhaps move into some legal issues.

PREPARING A RÉSUMÉ TO SEND ABROAD

The format and standard résumé categories will remain the same (such as contact information, education, experience, publications, activities, etc.). Modifications in some areas will be beneficial, however. This is also a time when the “one page” rule does not apply. International résumés can easily be two to four pages long.

- Dates should not be abbreviated (April 1, 2007, not 4/1/07).

- Spell out the name of states (Rhode Island, not RI).
- Do not use acronyms because they may not be understood (Bachelor of Arts, not BA).
- If you lived and studied in a country, include this information under “Education.”
- If you completed major research, or have focused your studies in a relevant area, also include this information under “Education.” Include a list of courses.
- When referring to a teaching position, include both grade and age because school systems vary overseas (e.g., “Taught 7th grade English to students ages 12 to 13”).
- Language skills are always important, so if you have them, include a section on languages (but not dialects, unless relevant). Do not overstate your abilities!
- Employers will rely on this information and your work could include interviewing clients in their native language. Indicate proficiency (bilingual, fluent, proficient, working knowledge, or basic) and type of skill (reading, conversational, written). Mention language certificates or degrees you may have.
- Include a section on travel, if you have traveled extensively. This will indicate your ease and familiarity with living abroad.
- Include conferences and seminars you may have attended that were specific to your chosen area of law or global region.
- Under “Experience,” be sure to list relevant projects and countries of emphasis where appropriate (even if work was completed domestically).

In some countries, like Germany, employers may expect to receive a folder with your résumé, copies of high school and university diplomas, letters of recommendation, and everything that proves your skills and experiences. Find out what is required.

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER AND LLM PROGRAMS

Consider summer abroad programs and, while there, make contacts with international professors and organizations in the area. If there is a work or internship component, participate in it. If there are no internship opportunities, try to arrange something yourself to gain relevant work experience in the area. A list of summer abroad programs sponsored by ABA-accredited law schools is available at www.abanet.org/legaled/studyabroad/foreign.html.

Many LLM programs have an international focus such as international economic law, environmental law, taxation, business and trade law, comparative law, or human rights. See www.abanet.org/legaled/postjdprograms/postjdc.html and also www.LLM-Guide.com, which allows you to search for country-specific LLM programs around the world.

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES OPPORTUNITIES IN US GOVERNMENT

Many government offices have a high concentration of international work and hire summer law clerks. Those offices include the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Export-Import Bank of the United States, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Peace Corps, US Agency for International Development, Department of State, Army Corps of Engineers, International Trade Commission, Trade and Development Agency, and Office of the US Trade Representative. Other departments and agencies will have international opportunities, though they are likely to be more limited.

Internships are available with Senators and House members, and interns may be assigned to assist Committees in their activities. Although some deal almost exclusively with international issues (e.g., Senate Committee on International Activities, Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and House Committee on International Relations), almost every Committee is involved with international issues at some time. For a list of Committees, see www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN COURTS, NGOS, NONPROFITS, AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

The World Legal Information Institute website (www.worldlii.org) contains a comprehensive database of international courts and tribunals, and country-specific legal information on a wide variety of topics including courts, governments, laws, law journals, and treaties. The Internet offers many opportunities to research other organizations related to foreign courts and rules of law, and *International Public Interest Law: A Guide to Opportunities in the United States and Abroad* (published by Harvard Law School's Office of Public Interest Advising) is another valuable resource.

International nonprofits and non-governmental organizations are best searched by region or subject area. PSLawNet (www.pslawnet.org) is one of the best places to begin this process. Students can register for their own PSLawNet accounts at <http://www.pslawnet.org/users/signup.php>. UW law students get free accounts since Wyoming is a subscriber school.

GENERAL RESOURCES AT UW COLLEGE OF LAW

The book *Careers in International Law* (2001) by Mark W. Janis and Salli A. Swartz is available in the Career Services Library.

If you go to UW Law Library's home page, there is a link to two helpful websites for careers in International Law. Go to: <http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/lawlib/> and click on "International Law Links."

You can also use PSLawNet's public section of its website. Go to: www.pslawnet.org, click on "Community/Resources" at the top of the page. Then click on "Helpful Resources." There is a handout to link to called "Finding and Funding International Public Service Opportunities." There is a lot of helpful information as well as links in that handout.

Another helpful link is found on the website of the American Society of International Law: <http://www.asil.org/careers/careerwebsites.html>.

If there is an area that you are interested in that is not covered here, please let the Director of Law Career Services know. She may be able to do some research or find resources to help you. The Career Services Office is here to help you, no matter what type of legal career path you seek to follow.