

RESUME & INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS

Phone: 517.353.1720 | Fax: 517.355.4657

E-mail: oiss@msu.edu | Web: www.oiss.msu.edu

Just as there are cultural differences in education systems and social life, there are cultural differences in what an employer expects during the interview process. This guide is designed to help international students in the U.S. understand what these cultural differences may be, help them create a U.S. appropriate resume, and prepare for a successful interview process.

RESUMES

A resume for a U.S. employer is a concise, attractive marketing tool that summarizes job skills, accomplishments, and academic background relevant to your employment objective. It is NOT a detailed chronological list of academic and formal work experience.

You should include:

- Full Name (*given name, family name*)
- Contact Information in the U.S.
- Career Objective (*optional*)
- Summary of Qualifications (*optional*)
- Education (*highest degree first*)
- Relevant Experience (*most recent experience first*)
- Leadership Experience (*optional*)
- Honors & Awards (*optional*)
- Languages (*other than English*)

You should NOT include:

- TOEFL Score
- Photograph
- Immigration Status
- Age
- Hometown/Home Country
- Marital Status
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion
- Personal Interests or Hobbies

INTERVIEWING

The most difficult thing for many international students during the interview process is selling themselves. The U.S. is a highly individualistic, direct culture where employers expect you to show confidence in yourself and enthusiasm for the job. To do this, you must openly discuss your goals and accomplishments in order to convince them you are the best candidate for the job. Many international students feel boastful and disrespectful when trying to discuss their qualifications in such an individualistic manner, but this is one of those situations where it is important that you practice expressing yourself confidently without sounding arrogant. Learning to find the appropriate language is often difficult, so it is very important that you take advantage of the programs your career center provides, such as practice interviews.

Interviewing DOs:

- Be on time
- Maintain eye contact
- Anticipate questions regarding competency and experience
- Openly discuss your accomplishments and skills
- Be direct and give specific examples that demonstrate your experience
- Be ready to discuss your strengths and weaknesses
- Know the organization (*shows initiative and interest*)
- Follow-up your interview with a thank you note

Interviewing DON'Ts:

- Be late
- Disclose age, race, marital status (*it is illegal for them to ask you such personal questions*)
- Answer questions indirectly
- Avoid responding to questions that require you to talk about your accomplishments and personal career goals
- Treat anyone you meet differently based on education, job title, sex, age, etc. (*politeness and respect are shown to all employees a candidate meets, whether a receptionist or CEO*)

DISCUSSING YOUR IMMIGRATION STATUS

Although it is illegal for a potential employer to ask you your race, nationality, or immigration status, they can however, ask you if you are authorized to work in the U.S. You are not required to offer the information if not asked about your employment eligibility, but it is very important that you are able to explain it if necessary. Not all employers are familiar with the work authorization associated with various immigration categories, so the more

knowledgeable you are about the employment options available to you; the more confident you will feel about the discussion. The Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) can help you to understand your work authorization options. Contact information can be found on the first page. Additionally, OISS hosts walk-in hours from 1-3 p.m. Monday through Friday each week.

Most importantly, emphasize the positive. Especially as more companies are going global, it is an advantage to many employers to have a bilingual employee and/or an employee familiar with work abroad. The fact that international students have lived and studied in another country shows determination and resourcefulness. Convey to the interviewer challenges you faced and overcame in this process. Be prepared to explain to your potential employer how hiring you offers more advantages than disadvantages.

CHALLENGES YOU MAY ENCOUNTER

No job search goes exactly as you plan. Successful searches require preparation for the cultural expectations of U.S. employers as well as addressing potential concerns. Challenges you may encounter include:

- **Language:** Finding the right words to express yourself professionally in a language that is not your first can be difficult. Take advantage of all your campus resources (Career Services Network, English Language Center, OISS programs) to practice your English and the vocabulary you need to make a positive impression on an employer in the U.S.
- **Hiring Complexities:** When your student work eligibility expires, in order to continue working in the U.S., your employer will be required to sponsor you for a 'change of status' to a work visa. The transition to another visa status requires careful planning well in advance of the expiration of your current immigration status. Not all employers have their own immigration department, therefore it is important that you are aware of the time it will take to change your status and be proactive in making sure your employer is aware. Because of this, as well as the costs involved in changing an employee's immigration status, some employers hesitate to hire international students. This is why you must be prepared to demonstrate what you can bring to the organization as well as the benefits of hiring a non-U.S. citizen.
- **Commitment:** Some employers fear international employees will return to their home country soon after the employer has invested time, money, training resources, and possibly sponsoring him/her for a work visa. It is important to show the employer your loyalty to the company and how you are an asset to the company's overseas operations.
- **Animosity:** Some Americans feel that by hiring an international student employers are taking jobs away from U.S. citizens. Due to the current economy, this sentiment may be more pronounced right now. You should be able to demonstrate how your skills and knowledge will be an asset to the company. Also, research diversity and its benefits in the workplace. If you are pursuing a degree in any of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields, you may also want to arm yourself with statistics that show international students are the majority of graduates in many of these fields.
- **Location:** International students often limit their job search to the east or west coasts (California, Seattle, Boston, New York, Washington D.C., etc.). The competition for these jobs thus becomes very intense. Be open to all locations, especially Southeast Michigan. Michigan is the first state to create a program specifically to recruit international students to live and work in the Detroit area. The **Global Talent Retention Initiative of Southeast Michigan (GTRI)** is being developed as a resource to connect employers in the Detroit area with international students seeking internships and full time employment during their practical training period.

Prepared by the Global Talent Retention Initiative (GTRI), adapted for Michigan State University by the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS).



**Global Talent
Retention Initiative**
of Southeast Michigan

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