

Resume Tips for International Legal Positions

What does a US JD student needs to add or change on his/her resume when applying for a position outside the United States?

Language proficiency

- Give detailed account of language proficiency. Make sure the student is actually fluent if they are going to indicate as such on the resume. Stress the importance of correctly indicating their language proficiency on their resume. They will be caught out if lacking! Give a detailed account of level of proficiency in different areas. Suggested format:

“Languages: French (Advanced spoken, intermediate reading and writing)

- For obvious non-English speakers or foreign born candidates, it may assist to indicate which language is “native” (their first spoken language), some candidates will be completely bilingual and that should also be indicated.

“Languages: English/Spanish (native languages), Italian (Fluent), Portuguese (Basic conversational).”

International experience

- Work experience, either paid or unpaid is very valuable and should be highlighted in the resume/CV and cover letter. If experience is matched to the position sought or the location, this should be emphasized. For example, a student who worked prior to law school in Asia and now seeks a position in an Asian office of a law firm should explain what they learned from previous experience and why that would help them be a good fit for the position and the country
 - Volunteer experience abroad is also valuable and indicates a candidate committed to international experiences. This should be detailed and again any specific links in terms of country, language, type of work should be articulated.
 - Experience studying abroad also indicates a long term interest in international subjects and should be on the resume, particularly if the candidate seeks to go back to the same country or a similar region etc.
 - In the absence of other experience, even travel to international destinations would be of value for a candidate with not much else on their resume. It may help to indicate the nature and

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extent of travel:

"Interests: Travelled extensively in South- East Asia including Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos."

The Curriculum Vitae (CV)

- If a CV is required it is generally longer than a resume with more detail in each section. It is not fundamentally different to a resume but more descriptive and typically lists more information. For example:
 - all awards, honors and prizes at undergraduate and graduate education
 - presentations, training courses and conferences (even if only attending)
 - all publications with description
 - all work experience post-graduation from undergraduate level
 - volunteer and extra-curricular activities
- Full explanations of anything that may not be understood outside the US will be required. If possible get a non-US lawyer/person to read through the resume. Anything they don't understand needs to be explained. For example:
 - law school status (include ranking etc)
 - law school grades or rank should be explained
 - certain honors/awards and prizes should be explained (e.g. magna cum laude, etc.)
 - all work experience should include detail of work performed, skills gained and the nature and status of the company (if not well-known globally) will need to be included
 - US-based work or volunteer experience such as AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, Teach for America which may be commonly understood inside the US will need to be explained to a foreign reader

Personal information and photos

- In many countries (e.g. in most Asian and South American countries) it is not only acceptable but expected that applicants indicate such personal information as age, gender, marital status and nationality on their resume and in many countries they would also include a photograph either on or attached to a CV for any professional job application

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- US-based applicants should not be surprised if this information is requested for certain positions. If it is not specifically requested, there is no requirement to place this information on the student's CV that happens to be applying for a position in that country. However, if it is requested and a student objects to providing it, it is recommended the student indicate that due to privacy concerns they wish to withhold the information rather than simply leaving it out. A student may wish to research what a resume/CV normally includes in that country in order to adapt their own resume accordingly. The International Directory of Lawyer Qualification (see Resources handout) provides some background on different resumes and CVs in other jurisdictions.

The importance of the application materials

- While resumes, cover letters and other additional application materials are always important for US positions, when US-based JD students are applying to positions in other countries, there will not be the same opportunity for the students to interview and network with their potential employer. The decision on whether to hire will largely be made on the paperwork. Sometimes there will also be a web-based or telephone interview but an in-person interview is unlikely. It is, therefore, very important to emphasize to students that their documentation needs to be something they spend some thought and time on, proofing it, having it reviewed, researching the right way to respond and, generally, giving it the attention it deserves.
- In addition, many of these international graduate positions or internships will be extremely competitive and the competition will be global and, so again, students must realize that, in their applications for such positions, they must be meticulous, they must do their research to put in the best possible application.