

Tips for International Students: Handling the Visa Question in U.S. Job Interviews

For an employer hiring a new employee, the main goal is to hire the best person for the job. Being invited for an interview is great news, as it means that the employer has decided from your resume and cover letter that you meet the criteria for the position. The interview is an opportunity for the employer to further assess your fit to the position, as well as to get to know you as a potential colleague. Hence, the goal of the interview is for you to highlight your strengths and your fit to the position you are interested in. The Career Development Center offers resources and tips on interviewing, as well as practice/mock interviews that will help you prepare for interviews in the U.S. Workplace.

DURING YOUR INTERVIEW

- Focus on your special skills and qualifications for the job. This is essential to the employer. Our handout on effective interviewing will help you prepare for common questions asked in interviews.
- Remember that, as an international student, you actually have certain advantages over U.S. students:
 1. You have spent several years living and studying in a foreign culture (the U.S.). By doing so, you have already demonstrated how adaptable you are to new environments. An employer wants to hire someone who will adapt well in a new job environment.
 2. You are statistically one of very few people from your country who uprooted themselves to come to the U.S. to further their education. This means you know how to take initiative. U.S. employers like employees who take initiative.
- If your native language is not English, you have successfully pursued an educational program in a foreign language. This means at least two things:
 1. If the organization has branches or offices overseas, you may be useful because you have demonstrated your ability to perform successfully in more than one language
 2. You had to work harder than native speakers of English to be successful in your academic program. Therefore, you have demonstrated that you can work under adverse conditions and that you are persistent in working toward goals you have set for yourself.

During your interview, take the opportunity to emphasize these characteristics that are highly regarded in the culture of the North American work place.

ON IMMIGRATION AND VISA-RELATED QUESTIONS IN AN INTERVIEW

- Go to your interview with some knowledge of your legal options. Nonimmigrant candidates have several options to legally work in the U.S. F-1 and J-1 students, for example, can work legally under Practical or Academic Training provisions. Many nonimmigrants are eligible to obtain H-1B status, which permits temporary professional employment for up to six years. Brown's Career Development Center and the Office of International Student & Scholar Services (OISSS) www.brown.edu/oisss offer workshops to explain these legal employment options and how to pursue them. If you know your eligibility and exactly what is involved in getting practical training authorization or H-1B status, you will be able to say confidently in the interview that the visa matters can be worked out.
- If your interviewer asks about your visa and work eligibility, answer directly and honestly. If your interview is coming to a close and the visa issue has not been mentioned yet, it is a good idea for you 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 options with you if I'm hired. My international student adviser has explained my legal options and the procedures that exist for my lawful employment." By bringing up the topic yourself, you are showing the employer that you are motivated to get the job and that you are ready to assist them with the procedure. **Adapted from Marcy Cohen, Director of the Rutgers-New Brunswick*

RESOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Office of International Student & Scholar Services (OISSS) - "Student" Section: <http://brown.edu/Administration/OISSS/students/>
- United States Citizenship & Immigration Service (USCIS) - "Services and Benefits" Section: <http://www.uscis.gov>
- Visa Services (from the U.S. State Department) - Information on obtaining a U.S. visa and more: http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html
- Foreignborn.com - Resources for entering and living in the U.S.: <http://www.foreignborn.com/>
- International Student.com - "Job Search" section: <http://www.internationalstudent.com>
- Association for International Practical Training - Programs for International Students: <http://www.aipt.org/programs/AmericanSemesterInternships/asi-index.htm>
- CTS International.com - International high-tech positions and in-house immigration assistance: <http://www.ctsinternational.com/>
- American Immigration Network, Inc. - Offers information (free) and services (fee-based): <http://usavisanow.com/>