

Fordham  
Law School  

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New York, New York

GRADUATE  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAM

GPDP MINI-GUIDE:  
INTERVIEWING FOR  
GRADUATE STUDENTS

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AND NON-J.D. PROGRAMS

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## I. INTRODUCTION TO INTERVIEWING

The interview is the result of a culmination of your efforts: resume design; cover letter drafting; employment research and outreach; and networking. In order to achieve a positive result – an offer – from the interview, you should approach the interview with the same work ethic and thorough preparation that you used in the other phases of the job search process. This Mini-Guide sets forth general considerations, tips, and advice you should consider and apply prior to, during, and after the interview. Each interview is different, as is each employer and job candidate; therefore, we encourage you to meet with us to discuss employer-specific interviewing strategies.

The fact that you were invited for an interview means that the employer has determined that your qualifications are of sufficient interest to meet with you. The interview is your opportunity to convey to the employer why you are the right person for the open position. Whether or not asked outright, the ultimate question from the employer is: "Why should I hire you?"

## II. TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWS

There are two basic types of employment interviews: a screening interview (or “first round” interview) and a callback interview (or “second round” interview). Your preparation should be similar for each of these types of interviews.

A screening interview can take place at a job fair, such as ISIP, or may take place in an employer's office or over the phone. At a screening interview, you will usually meet with one or two representatives from the employer who will assess whether to invite you back for a second round interview. A typical screening interview lasts from 15 to 30 minutes, but you should always be prepared for a longer, more thorough interview, particularly in the context of a screening interview at the employer's office (where a screening interview can last as long as two hours).

Following a screening interview, an employer may choose to bring you back for a second round interview, often referred to as a “callback interview.” These further rounds of interviews usually take place in the employer's office and can last anywhere from an hour or two to a half-day or longer. Usually you will meet with several representatives from the employer, individually or in small groups, and you may be asked to have lunch or dinner with additional representatives.

## III. FIVE BASIC RULES FOR INTERVIEWING

Whatever form an interview may take, there are five basic rules that will help ensure success: 1. Know Your Materials; 2. Do Your Research; 3. Practice Your Interviewing Skills; 4. Prepare Questions for the Interviewer; and 5. Emphasize Your Strengths. These rules are described in detail below.

### ***Rule #1: Know Your Materials***

You should be prepared to discuss in great detail any materials that you submit to an employer during the course of the interview. Be prepared to discuss in depth all experiences included on your resume. You must have intimate knowledge of your own resume and what it contains. If your resume lists activities in which you drafted legal documents, be prepared to discuss them in detail even if you did not provide them as writing samples. If you submitted a

writing sample, be prepared to discuss the arguments you set forth, cases cited, and the facts presented. Anticipate the tough questions (for instance, regarding a period of unemployment, a short tenure in a job, or mediocre grades) and prepare thoughtful answers. Do not be defensive when answering questions that address perceived weak spots. Do not make excuses. Maintain both your composure and your eye contact. A mock interview is a great tool to prepare for such situations.

### ***Rule #2: Do Your Research***

Adequate and effective research will help you demonstrate your knowledge of a particular employer, a practice area, the market in general, or current events. It will allow you to ask relevant questions of the employer to demonstrate your interest in the employer and the position, and to make informed decisions about the employer and the position for which you are interviewing.

Get in the habit of reading daily newspapers. Knowledge of current events, especially those in the legal community, is not only useful in an interview but it is expected by employers. In particular, students should regularly read one of the major newspapers, such as *The New York Times*; a major business newspaper, such as *The Wall Street Journal* or the *Financial Times*; and a major legal newspaper, such as the *New York Law Journal*.

Once you secure an interview, you should begin researching the organization. Employers expect a prospective employee to have done some research about them prior to the interview, and to ask informed questions during the interview. Doing this will allow you to demonstrate your knowledge of the employer, as well as your ability to make a contribution to the organization's mission. Be sure to take advantage of the many online research tools available to you via the [GDPD website](#).<sup>1</sup> You should also conduct an internet search to find any recent news involving the organization. This can be done by going to [Google](#)<sup>2</sup> and clicking on "News" at the top of the page, then searching the name of the company or firm.

In most cases, the most important tool you will use to research a firm or company is the organization's website. Familiarize yourself with general information that is available on the website. When you interview, you do not want to ask a question that is readily available on the website. If the website discusses the particular program for which you are interviewing, familiarize yourself with that information. When scheduling your interview, try to find out who will be interviewing you. The website is valuable for researching these particular individuals, but keep in mind that last minute conflicts can result in interviewers being replaced.

### ***Rule #3: Practice Your Interviewing Skills***

Practice will alleviate much of the inevitable pre-interview nervousness. It is important that you practice out loud. This will give you a feel for the tone and timing of your answers to common interview questions. A list of common interview questions to help you practice can be found in [Annex A](#) of this Mini-Guide.

The GDPD offers practice interview sessions throughout the year in order to assist students

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<sup>1</sup> <http://law.fordham.edu/llm/gdpd>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.google.com>.

with their interview skills. Students wishing to schedule a practice interview may do so by selecting two time slots via [bit.ly/GPDPSignup](http://bit.ly/GPDPSignup) and specifying in the comments the purpose of the appointment. Students are also strongly encouraged to send an email providing greater detail regarding the interview for which the student is preparing. Students are encouraged to dress in interview-appropriate attire for the practice interview.

#### ***Rule #4: Prepare Questions for the Interviewer***

While you are researching, write down some questions that you may ask during the interview. Do not bring a written list of questions to the interview, but prepare possible questions in advance so you will be able to ask questions during the interview should certain topics arise. Thoughtful questions by an interviewee are greatly appreciated by the employer; it shows interest in the employer and subtly answers the second most important question for the employer: “Why do you want this job?” Annex B of this Mini-Guide sets forth some suggested questions for students to ask interviewers.

#### ***Rule #5: Emphasize Your Strengths***

Take time to evaluate your skills and experiences. You should be able to walk into an interview with a clear idea of two or three selling points that you would like to express to the employer. You should use the interviewer's questions to introduce these points and back them up with real-life examples. This will also be useful at the end of the interview to enable you to summarize your qualifications and articulate your interest in the position.

### **IV. PROFESSIONAL IMAGE**

You should strive to maintain a professional image at all times. Your professional image goes beyond your clothing and appearance, and also relates to your demeanor, comportment, and behavior.

#### **A. General Considerations**

- Use a firm handshake. A handshake that is too weak can convey a lack of confidence, while a handshake that is too strong can convey arrogance or can actually hurt. To give the right impression, you should practice a firm (but not overly firm) handshake that conveys confidence and competence.
- Use good personal hygiene.
  - Make sure your breath is inoffensive. Bad breath has a stronger negative impact than many people realize. Do not chew gum in an interview. If you must chew gum before an interview (to address a breath issue), discard it before entering the interview.
  - Deodorant is a must.
  - Your fingernails should be clean and short. No colorful nail polish.
  - Do not wear excessive amounts of perfume or cologne. As a general rule, unless

someone is embracing you, they should not be able to smell you.

- Facial hair, if worn, should be well groomed.
- Carry a conservative folder or portfolio to hold your resumes and other documents. Women may carry a small handbag in addition to this folder, but other bags and backpacks should be left at home.
- Bring extra copies of application documents. You should have on hand several copies of your resume, transcripts, writing sample, and list of references, should the interviewer request copies of those documents.
- Smoking is generally frowned upon in the U.S. Be extra careful to make sure you do not smell like cigarettes before going into the interview.
- Smile often and maintain comfortable eye contact.
- Be punctual. This means arriving in the office of the organization with which you are interviewing 5-10 minutes early. Be sure to arrive in the neighborhood well in advance of the interview time so that you are not caught off-guard by train delays or traffic, and allow ample time to go through security, which is common in most office buildings in New York and can take up to 20 minutes during busy times (like 9:00 a.m., when many meetings start). Be sure to bring a government-issued photo identification, as this may be required to pass through security. Additionally, students who are interviewing with government agencies and/or judges should be cognizant of additional security measures at these buildings and should inquire of the human resources representative as to the building's policies (*i.e.*, laptop computers, cell phones, and other similar items may not be permitted, so students should either leave these devices at home or allow for additional time because these devices may need to be checked with the security desk).
- Turn off your cell phone and keep it off throughout the course of the interview.
- Be courteous. Be respectful to everyone with whom you interact, regardless of their position. An employer is not just an entity; it is composed of people, and you want to demonstrate that you are respectful, collegial, and will work well with all other employees.

## **B. Interviewing Attire**

You should always opt for business attire (*i.e.*, a suit) for a job interview, regardless of whether you are interviewing with a law firm, public interest organization, government office, or any other setting. Err on the conservative side; it is never wrong to be slightly overdressed, and it is far better to be overdressed than underdressed. Being slightly overdressed conveys that you take yourself and the position seriously; being underdressed, on the other hand, can demonstrate poor judgment or lack of self-confidence. Follow the guidelines below to ensure that you present yourself in an appropriate and professional manner.

- Choose a grey or navy suit. Black may also work well for women.

- All clothes should be well-pressed and clean, and should fit well. Fit is extremely important. Clothes that are too big or too small look messy and unprofessional.
- Buy a suit that is within your price range. You will not be judged for not owning a high-end, designer suit, but you will be expected to wear your suit appropriately and professionally. You do not need more than one suit; if you have a second interview, you can vary what you wear under your suit.
- Men:
  - Suits should be single-breasted. Fabric should be seasonally appropriate (a mid-weight suit will be appropriate year-round). No loud pinstripes; a solid suit is best. If you are buying a new suit, make sure you pull out the thread in the back of the suit that keeps the back vent closed (it looks like a big “X”) and on the sleeves. Also, if there is a label lightly stitched onto the outside of the sleeve, it should be removed.
  - Wear a white or light-blue collared shirt under your suit. No button-down collars.
  - Wear a tie in a conservative color with a conservative print (a small dot or classic stripe works well). Do not wear a pocket square. Bow ties are not appropriate.
  - Socks should be in a dark color and should coordinate with your suit.
  - Shoes should be simple lace-ups, well shined.
  - Men may wear conservative cufflinks, watches, or rings (such as wedding bands), but other jewelry is inappropriate.
- Women:
  - A skirt or pants suit is equally appropriate, though a skirt suit is considered to be a more conservative/formal choice.
  - No sandals or open toed shoes. Heels should be of a conservative height.
  - Women should not wear low-cut tops or short skirts.
  - Jewelry should be small and conservative.
  - If long hair will be distracting (*e.g.*, you will play with it or it will cover your face), it should be pulled back.
  - Skirts should be of a conservative length (*i.e.*, at or slightly above knee) and should be worn with panty hose in a flesh tone or black. If you buy a skirt suit, make sure you have pulled out the thread in the back that keeps the slit closed in the store (it looks like a big “X”).
  - Fabric should be appropriate to the season that you are in (*i.e.*, lighter fabrics in the summer, heavier fabrics in the winter). Mid-weight fabrics are appropriate year-round.

## V. IN THE INTERVIEW

### A. The Conversation – General Tips

An interview is, in essence, a conversation. The goal of the conversation, from the interviewer's perspective, is to determine whether the interviewee is a good fit for an open position in the organization. The goal of the conversation, from the interviewee's perspective, is to convince the interviewer that he/she is a good fit for the open position. The interviewee may also be trying to determine whether he/she actually wants the position, but that secondary goal can wait until after the offer comes. In the meantime, the interviewee should avoid saying anything that might jeopardize his or her chances of receiving an offer.

When you go into the interview, you should have in mind your "narrative." Your narrative should explain how your experience and education have led you to this particular place and this particular position. Include only relevant details (*i.e.*, details the employer will care about) and focus on how your experience/education/goals align with their needs. Look at the job posting. What do they ask for? Do you fit this description? Highlight the ways in which you fit the profile of the candidate they are looking for. However, do not slavishly tell your narrative at the expense of an organic conversation. Stay in the moment and be prepared to improvise.

The following tips can help you come across positively in an interview:

- If you take notes during the interview, they should be very brief and must not distract you from the conversation. At the interview, you should be completely focused on the interviewer and the conversation that you are having. Taking notes can be distracting and may even be perceived as rude given your limited ability to make eye contact as you multi-task. While it is a good idea to jot down your impressions, key points in your conversation, and other details, you should be careful about doing during the interview, and be sure to set aside time to do this in great detail after the interview has ended and you have left the premises.
- Be positive. Never say anything negative about any person, former employer, etc. It may reflect poorly on you and you might be remembered as a negative person.
- Establish your connection to out-of-town employers. If the employer with whom you are interviewing is located outside the New York City vicinity, be proactive in establishing your connection to that locale and the reasons for your interest in relocating and working there.
- Take your time in answering questions. When answering a question, especially a question that is unanticipated or unusual, remember that it is acceptable to pause to frame an answer or to say "I'd like to take a moment to think about that question."
- Maintain composure when you are asked tough questions. Before an interview, consider what questions may be asked that will pose challenges for you. Are your grades weak? Do you have gaps on your resume? Think carefully about how to handle these questions with confidence and poise. Your answer to any tough question should be short and positive. A mock interview is a terrific opportunity to prepare for these

challenges. Keep in mind that the fact that you were offered an interview probably means that there is nothing on your resume that would *per se* disqualify you for the position, so stay confident.

- If an interviewer asks you a question to which you do not know the answer, an honest answer is likely the best option. Do not pretend to know something or make something up. For instance, if the interviewer asks you about a particular current event with which you are unfamiliar, indicate that you have not had a chance to read about it.
- At the end of the interview, remember to thank the interviewer and ask for a business card. The business card will help you remember who you interviewed with and will give you the interviewer's contact information to send a thank you email.
- Annex A to this Mini-Guide provides a list of questions an interviewer may ask you. You should practice answering these questions aloud several times in advance of any interview you have. Practice with a friend; you may be surprised by which questions give you the most trouble.

## **B. Behavioral Interviewing**

Behavioral interviewing techniques are increasingly used by employers, including those in the legal industry, to assess a candidate's future performance based on past behavior in similar situations. By asking open-ended questions, employers hope to ascertain whether candidates have the attributes or behaviors that they seek. Below are examples of behavioral interviewing questions:

- *Describe a situation in which you were working on a group project and one of the team members disagreed with your suggestions. What did you do?*
- *Tell me about a time when you missed an important deadline. How did you handle the situation and what was the outcome?*
- *Describe a situation in which you had to lead a group to consensus and tell me how you went about achieving the desired result.*
- *What was the most difficult assignment you have had to date? What was your role?*
- *Describe an experience at school or in a job where you had responsibility for a matter and you were disappointed with the outcome. What could you have done differently?*

Take a moment to think before answering these types of questions. Think about why the employer is asking the question. Typical traits that employers are attempting to find by asking these questions include:

- Teamwork
- Analytical skills
- Adaptability

- Work standards
- Initiative
- Job motivation
- Planning and organization
- Communication

One method for answering these questions is to follow the “SAR” approach: situation, action, result. Think of a situation from your past experience that applies to the question being asked. Describe the actions you took (or did not take) in response to that situation. Explain the outcome and how your actions contributed to the result.

### **C. Asking Informed Questions**

Toward the end of the interview, the interviewer will likely say something like “Do you have any questions for me?” This is not a rhetorical question; the employer is purposefully giving you the opportunity to show that you are truly interested in the position. This part of the interview can separate the mediocre candidates from the standouts. This is your chance to demonstrate your interest in the employer, as well as your understanding of its business and your potential contributions, by asking relevant, insightful questions of the interviewer. Annex B to this Mini-Guide sets forth suggested questions to ask interviewers, however you should use these suggestions judiciously, as the best questions will be specifically tailored to the particular employer.

### **D. Illegal Questions**

In the U.S. there are laws that render some questions illegal during an interview. Generally speaking, employers should not be asking about your race, gender, religion, marital status, age, disabilities, ethnic background, or sexual orientation. While certain government and public international law positions may have age and citizenship criteria as prerequisites for employment, it is unlikely that such issues would be addressed in an interview; presumably, you would have done your research and know whether you qualify for such a position before even applying.

Examples of illegal questions include the following:

- Questions relating to gender or marital/family status. In particular, women may face questions such as the following:
  - *As a mother, what childcare arrangements have you made?*
  - *Do you plan on having children?*
  - *Are you married?*
  - *Do you intend to get married?*
  - *How would you handle working with clients who are all men?*

- Questions relating to nationality or citizenship, including the following:
  - *Where were you born?*
  - *Where are you from?*
  - *What is your native language?*
  - *What is your maiden name?*
  - Note: Employers *can* ask whether you are legally authorized to work in the U.S. Also, if you are interviewing for a position for which your fluency in a particular language is an advantage, you should expect questions about your language abilities (and such questions would not be inappropriate under those circumstances).
- Questions relating to religion, including the following:
  - *Do you go to church on Sundays?*
  - *Do you observe Shabbat?*
  - *Are you a practicing Muslim?*

In most cases, employers stumble upon inappropriate questions inadvertently, though answering the questions can lead to subtle forms of discrimination. That is the reason the questions are illegal in the first place—to avoid such discrimination. The following steps can help you determine what to do when confronted with an illegal interview question:

***Step One: Ascertain the Interviewer’s Intent in Asking the Question***

The two most common reasons that an interviewer may ask an illegal question are as follows: (1) the interviewer may be trying to get to a legitimate issue, but is asking in the wrong way (for example, an interviewer who asks whether the interviewee is married may be trying to ascertain how flexible the interviewee is with respect to relocating to a new city); or (2) the question may come up in small talk (for example, “where are you from?” is a question that people frequently ask as a way of breaking the ice). A third option, of course, is that the interviewer is intentionally asking a discriminatory question with the intention of discriminating against you based on the answer to that question.

***Step Two: Determine Whether You are Comfortable Answering the Question***

Not all illegal questions are cause for alarm. For example, if you are interviewing for a job as a foreign associate in a law firm, your connection to Brazil may be important. In that context, the question “Where are you from?” may be one you are perfectly comfortable answering. On the other hand, questions such as “Do you have children?” or “Do you observe Shabbat?” may be questions you do not feel comfortable answering. If you feel comfortable with a question, go ahead and answer it. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, move on to step three.

### ***Step Three: Plan a Tactful Response***

It is not a good idea to respond to an illegal question by stomping out of the interview in an indignant huff or threatening to sue the interviewer. As mentioned above, most interviewers stumble upon the questions accidentally and if the job is one you are truly interested in, it may be best to give the interviewer the benefit of the doubt and come up with a tactful way of addressing the interviewer's query.

If the interviewer seems to be trying to get at a legitimate issue, but is asking the wrong way, you should respond by answering the appropriate question underlying the illegal question. For example, if an interviewer asks whether you plan to have children in an attempt to ascertain your long term commitment to the company, you can respond by stating that you are firmly committed to a long term career in X field, and ask about opportunities for advancement within the company.

If the question comes up in small talk, the response is a little bit trickier. The interviewer is not trying to get the answer to a legitimate question. Rather, he or she just asked an inappropriate question that is unrelated to the position without thinking about it, likely in an attempt to be friendly. The best way to handle this situation is to give a vague response, then change the subject to something more appropriate, or if possible, to simply ignore the question and redirect the discussion.

*Note: The above advice is merely a guideline for how to deal with this issue if it arises. Because each case is unique, ultimately you must decide in the moment how to best handle the situation. If you have any questions or if you feel you have been a victim of employment discrimination, you should contact the GPDP at [gdpd@law.fordham.edu](mailto:gdpd@law.fordham.edu).*

## **E. Special Considerations for Callback Interviews**

Callback interviews, usually held at the employer's office, are longer and more thorough than initial screening interviews. Often during a callback interview you will have an opportunity to meet with four or five attorneys and you may be taken to lunch or dinner. The considerations described elsewhere in this Mini-Guide apply equally to callback interviews, but there are a few additional things to keep in mind.

### **1. Focus of the Callback Interview**

The general focus of the callback interview is to assess your "fit" with the employer. While the assessment of the substance of your legal acumen and ability are important aspects, the employer is equally concerned with assessing you as a future colleague.

### **2. Response to a Callback Interview Invitation**

An employer will generally contact you by telephone or email to invite you for a callback interview. The email or call may be made by the recruiting coordinator, the hiring partner, or one of the attorneys that interviewed you. Be sure to check your email and voice messages frequently and respond promptly to all callback invitations. Your response should convey enthusiasm and you should be prepared to schedule the interview. Business etiquette dictates that you return the

call of an employer inviting you for a callback interview even if you intend to decline the invitation.

### **3. The Meal**

Some law firms may end a callback interview with either a lunch or, less frequently, a dinner. Remember that this is still an interview: choose food that is easy to eat (*i.e.*, no spaghetti or messy finger foods), maintain your professional decorum, do not order alcohol, and remember your table manners. Avoid ordering the most expensive item on the menu and ask the attorneys for recommendations so you have a sense of what they will order and whether they will be ordering appetizers and dessert with their meal. Follow their lead on ordering or it could be an awkward 15 minutes while you eat dessert and the others wait for you to finish.

## **VI. AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

### **A. Thank-You Notes**

A thank-you note is a great vehicle for reinforcing your interest in the organization. However, it will be the last impression you make with an interviewer, so it is important to remember that it is a professional communication. Do not rely solely on your computer's spell check. Proofread your correspondence prior to sending it. The correspondence should be brief. Thank the interviewer for his/her time and the opportunity to learn about the firm/position, and refer to something specific that was discussed in the interview. If you met with several people during your interview, you should write a brief thank you note to each person. Be sure to vary what you say in each note. Thank-you notes should be sent to the interviewer(s) as soon as possible (the same day or the next day at the latest). Sample thank you emails are included in Annex C of this Mini-Guide. Emails are standard—handwritten or typed letters are rarely used for thank you letters following interviews.

### **B. Accepting or Rejecting an Offer**

It is an exciting time when you receive an offer. Nevertheless, be aware of certain protocol for accepting and rejecting offers. Failure to follow proper form may reflect negatively on you and the law school as a whole.

#### **1. NALP Principles and Standards**

The National Association for Law Placement (NALP), of which Fordham Law School is a member, has developed policies set forth in its Principles and Standards, which apply to student and employer conduct of interviews, as well as to the timing and deadlines for offers. The [NALP Principles and Standards](http://www.nalp.org/fulltextofnalprinciplesandstandards)<sup>3</sup> are set forth for all NALP member employers and law schools. Students are expected to read the full document.

#### **2. Contacting the Employer**

Whether you plan to accept or reject an offer, proper business etiquette dictates that you return the call or email of the person who made you the offer as soon as possible, and preferably

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nalp.org/fulltextofnalprinciplesandstandards>.

within one business day. If you call and get the person's voicemail, do not accept or reject the offer over voicemail. Instead, leave your name and number and request that the person call you back. Follow the lead of your contact to determine whether to accept or reject via email or by phone.

*Acceptance.* When accepting an offer, if you accept first by phone you should then confirm your acceptance in writing by email. See [Annex D](#) of this Mini-Guide for an example of such an email.

*Rejection.* When rejecting an offer, take care not to offend the employer and be gracious by indicating the difficulty of your decision. If you reject the offer by phone, follow up with a gracious, yet brief email. See [Annex E](#) of this Mini-Guide for an example of such an email.

*Receipt of an offer on which you have yet to decide.* Contact the person by phone or by email, as appropriate. State your understanding of the offer and express your enthusiasm. Inquire regarding the date by which the employer would like you to make a decision. Generally, a decision should be made within 10 days of receipt of an offer, but it is important to maintain close contact with the employer regarding the timing of your decision. Let them know the general timeframe by which you will have made your decision. If you are a mid-career attorney applying for a specific position (as opposed to an entry-level associate position at a law firm), be aware that the appropriate timeframe for accepting or rejecting an offer is typically much shorter.

## **VII. STUDENT PROFESSIONALISM STANDARDS**

See the GPDP Student Professionalism Standards, which are attached hereto as [Annex F](#). Students are expected to review and adhere to these Standards throughout their job searches and in all interview situations.

## ANNEX A: QUESTIONS INTERVIEWERS MAY ASK

- *Tell me about yourself.* This is a deceptively tricky question. What they are really asking is “What in your background makes you an ideal candidate for this job?” This is not the time to launch into a full autobiography. Stick to relevant details and formulate a cohesive narrative that shows how your relevant background has led you to apply to this particular position and why that experience makes you the ideal candidate for the job. This is the perfect time to use your “elevator pitch.”

For someone in the job market, an elevator pitch is a short summary of who you are. The term comes from the idea that you should be able to deliver the pitch in the time span of an elevator ride. Your elevator pitch should show that you are a confident, capable person who would excel in an appropriate position.

In formulating an elevator pitch, consider using a past-present-future formulation. In this formulation, the pitch would convey where you have come from (past), where you are now (present), and where you are going (future). These three elements should come together in a cohesive story--each part should lead into and relate to the next part.

For example, if you are an LL.M. student in the Intellectual Property and Information Technology program and your objective is to obtain a position with a boutique intellectual property firm, you might focus on the following:

- Past: What past experiences led you to pursue this LL.M. degree?
- Present: How is the LL.M. program making you a better candidate/helping you to reach your goals?
- Future: Where do you hope your LL.M. degree will lead you in the future?

The past-present-future formulation will show that you are a person with a clear direction and well-defined goals, and gives you the opportunity to highlight your experience and qualities that would make you a good candidate for a position.

- *What are your long- and short-term goals? OR Where do you see yourself in five/ten years?* Your goals should demonstrate a long-term commitment to the position and the employer.
- *Why did you choose law as a career?*
- *Why did you decide to pursue the LL.M. degree program in which you are currently enrolled?*
- *Why did you choose Fordham?*
- *What law school course did you enjoy the most? The least?* Be careful with any question that asks you to describe something you did not like. Stay positive. It is not a bad answer to say that there were no courses that you disliked, but that you found one course or another particularly challenging. You could then describe how you grew from the challenge and describe how it positively impacted your law school experience. Do not go negative!
- *Why should we hire you?* You should know going into the interview what strengths you want

to highlight. This is your chance to state why you are such a great candidate.

- *What is your greatest strength?* This should be relevant to the position. In discussing your strength, relate it to the position.
- *What is your greatest weakness?* This is a tricky question to answer. There are two ways you can successfully address this question. One approach is to give an answer that is unrelated to the job (e.g., “I am a terrible cook”), but the better approach is to discuss something that was previously a weakness that is no longer a weakness, and discuss how you worked hard to overcome that weakness. This is a way of turning a weakness into a strength.
- *In what ways do you think you can contribute to our organization?*
- *In what sort of environment do you typically thrive?*
- *What do you like to do outside of law school?* In other words, what makes you interesting? This serves the same purpose as the “Interests” section of your resume.
- *Why do you want to work with our company/firm/organization?* This is where your research will come in handy. Be specific and show a genuine interest in the organization.
- *I see from your resume that you enjoy scuba-diving.* The interviewer is trying to break the ice. Talk about your interest in scuba-diving, giving details and engaging the interviewer in conversation. She may also be testing you to be sure that the representations in your resume are accurate.
- *What else do you think I should know about you?* Add anything you think is relevant that hasn’t yet been covered, or use this as an opportunity to reiterate your strengths and restate your interest in the position.
- *Why are you interested in working in this industry/field/sector?* In particular, if you are looking to work in the public sector, employers will want to see a dedication to that type of work. Give as much background as you can to show that you have a history of interest in this area.
- *Where else are you applying?* You are not required to divulge every employer to whom you have applied. Rather, emphasize those employers who share similar characteristics with the employer with whom you are interviewing, then state why you are particularly interested in working for *this* employer.
- *Are you applying to jobs in other cities?* If so, be prepared to explain your geographic flexibility.
- *In what practice groups are you most interested?* Do your research. Make sure that the firm actually has that practice area, and that it is conducted out of the office in which you are interviewing.
- *Do you have any questions for me?* Do not say no! Refer to [Annex B](#) for sample questions to ask the interviewer.

## **ANNEX B: QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER**

- *What is a typical day like for someone in this position?*
- *How is work assigned and supervised?*
- *How would you describe the company's/firm's/organization's culture?*
- *How is performance evaluated?*
- *What do you like best about working here?*
- *What do you think will be the most challenging aspect of this position?*
- *What are the most important skills for a lawyer to have in order to thrive in this environment?*
- *How did you come to work for this firm/organization/company?*
- *How did you come to work in your particular practice area?*

Questions NOT to ask (these issues can be addressed after you have received an offer):

- *What benefits do you offer?*
- *How many weeks of vacation would I get?*
- *What is the salary? Do you pay bonuses?*
- *What are the hours?*
- *Can I work from home? Do you offer options for a flexible working schedule?*
- *Would I have to work evenings/weekends?*

## ANNEX C: SAMPLE THANK-YOU EMAILS

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me this morning at the International Student Interview Program at NYU. I truly enjoyed our conversation and am very excited about the possibility of working at Doe & Smith. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Maria Gonzales

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Dear Ms. Doe:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me this morning. I enjoyed our discussion about the intellectual property practice at the firm and I was particularly interested to learn about the new marketing efforts Doe & Smith is undertaking for that group.

I remain very interested in the position. Please let me know if I can provide you with any additional documentation that may further my candidacy. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

Chen Xu

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Dear Mr. Cobb:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me yesterday regarding an associate position with Jones, Smith & Doe. I enjoyed speaking with you about your recent trip to Italy and about the new business opportunities being explored by your office. I remain very interested in a position with Jones Smith and I am confident that I would make a positive addition to your New York office.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Best regards,

Isabella Ferrari  
Fordham Law School

**ANNEX D: SAMPLE ACCEPTANCE EMAIL**

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am very happy to accept your offer of a nine-month internship position with Jones, Smith & Howard. As we discussed, I look forward to starting my internship this coming fall and will contact you in the near future to discuss the specific start date. I am excited to become a part of the Jones Smith team, and I look forward to working with you soon.

Kind regards,  
Maria Gonzales

**ANNEX E: SAMPLE REJECTION EMAIL**

Dear Mr. Cobb:

Per our conversation, I regret that I must decline your offer for an associate position with your firm. I greatly enjoyed meeting with you and your colleagues and I continue to hold Jones, Smith & Doe in the highest regard.

Thank you again for your time and assistance throughout the interview process.

Very truly yours,  
Isabella Ferrari

## **ANNEX F: GPDP STUDENT PROFESSIONALISM STANDARDS**

The Graduate Professional Development Program (GPDP) is committed to the ethical and professional development of each law student. To that end, these Student Professionalism Standards were created to ensure that each student is aware of professionalism expectations of employers and the legal community in connection with their job search. Adherence to these Standards demonstrates ethics and professionalism ultimately reflecting positively upon Fordham Law School and each student individually. In these Standards, references to "position," "job," or "employer" include paid and unpaid positions, internships, externships, academic-year employment, summer positions, or post-graduation positions.

Please review the following Standards carefully.

1. Students are required to act ethically and with integrity throughout the job search process. Each student will do the following:
  - a. provide accurate and honest information on all resumes and applications provided to the GPDP, the Public Interest Resource Center (PIRC), or any other office in the Law School or sent directly to potential employers;
  - b. contact the GPDP to discuss any item on his or her resume that he/she is unsure is represented honestly and accurately;
  - c. attend all interviews obtained through job fairs including the International Student Interview Program, and/or demonstrate professionalism by canceling in accordance with the stated policies of the applicable job fair;
  - d. attend all interviews obtained through other sources including but not limited to the Fordham Law School Job Bank and/or demonstrate professionalism by canceling with no less than two (2) business days notice;
  - e. upon accepting a position, (i) cease all further job search efforts; (ii) inform all employers with whom he or she has an application pending of acceptance of the position and withdraw his or her application with those organizations (for purposes of this paragraph, "pending" includes those firms with whom the student has had or has scheduled an interview, but a final employment decision has not been made on either the part of the employer or the part of the student); and (iii) if contacted by another employer, inform that employer that he/she has accepted another position;
  - f. demonstrate professionalism by returning the calls of any prospective employer within two (2) business days, even if it is simply to inform them of the acceptance of another position or if undecided about their offer of a position;
  - g. respond to all offers of employment promptly, even if only to request time to consider the offer.
2. Fordham Law School is a member of the Association for Legal Career Professionals (NALP). Every student must abide and adhere to the NALP Principles and Standards for

Law Placement and Recruiting in their entirety (see <http://www.nalp.org/fulltextofnalpprinciplesandstandards>).

*Students whose actions in the job search do not adhere to items 1 and 2 above will be required to meet with the Assistant Dean of International and Non-J.D. programs to discuss the individual infraction. As a result of this meeting a student may be subject to penalties up to the loss of the right to utilize GDPD and/or PIRC services. These remedies are not exclusive of any penalties or procedures that may be applicable pursuant to the Fordham Law School Academic Code of Conduct.*