

Fordham
Law School

New York, New York

GRADUATE
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM

GPDP MINI-GUIDE:
TRANSCRIPTS, WRITING SAMPLES,
AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT
DOCUMENTS

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AND NON-J.D. PROGRAMS

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This mini-guide covers various types of application documents that employers may request that are not covered in other mini-guides. This includes transcripts, writing samples, references, letters of recommendation, and transaction lists / deal sheets.

I. TRANSCRIPTS

Students should bring copies of their Fordham Law School transcripts as well as transcripts from their undergraduate institutions or other law schools to interviews. Unless an employer specifies that they need an official transcript, an unofficial transcript will suffice.

For instructions on how to request your transcript, go to the registrar's website at <http://law.fordham.edu/registrar/2766.htm>. You can also access a .pdf version of the transcript legend on this webpage, which contains an explanation of LL.M. and M.S.L. grades. It is necessary that this legend accompany your transcript in order for employers to decipher your grades. Note that .pdf transcripts for current students require one day advance notice for processing. Transcripts for alumni may take longer. Do not wait until the last minute to do this.

Please note that the Office of International and Non-J.D. Programs cannot provide transcripts to students. These can only be accessed through the registrar's office.

If any of your transcripts are not in English, you should also bring with you a certified English language translation of the foreign transcript.

II. WRITING SAMPLES

The writing sample is a critical part of a job application, particularly for foreign-trained students for whom English is not the first language. Many employers have expressed concern regarding such students' English writing abilities, and a high quality writing sample can allay those concerns. All students should bring a writing sample to each round of interviews, even if it has not been requested prior to the interview.

A. Choosing a Writing Sample

Choose a writing sample that involves analysis of a legal issue, ideally one that also shows your use of the "Bluebook" legal citation format. The writing sample should be the length specified by the employer. If no length is specified, 5-15 pages in length is typical. The writing sample should have no grammatical, spelling, formatting, or citation errors. If you are drawing your writing sample from a document that is longer than 15 pages, you may use an excerpt from the larger document and explain that in the cover sheet (discussed below).

The following types of documents may be used as a legal writing sample:

- a memorandum prepared in connection with your legal writing course;
- a memorandum or other document prepared for an employer (you must first obtain the employer's permission and redact any confidential and/or client information);
or
- legal articles you have written in English or research papers written for a law class.

B. Editing Your Writing Sample

It is best to submit a writing sample that is only minimally edited by others, as this provides the best example of your work product. You should, however, have someone review it for typos or grammatical or citation errors. Please note that the GPDP does not review writing samples.

C. Cover Sheet/Presentation

Your writing sample must be accompanied by a cover sheet that explains the context in which the sample was written and whether it has been edited. Appendix A of this Mini-Guide provides a sample cover sheet.

Use the same heading you use for your cover letter and resume for your cover sheet. You should also add a header to each page of your writing sample with your name and the page number in case the pages of your sample become detached from one another. Your writing sample may be printed on regular paper (*i.e.*, it need not be printed on resume quality paper).

III. REFERENCES AND LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Some employers will ask students for references; a few may ask for letters of recommendation, but this is highly uncommon among U.S. employers.

A. References

In asking for references, the employer is seeking contact information for people that may be contacted about your qualifications, experience, work habits, and work ethic. Students should prepare a list of references to bring with them on an interview, regardless of whether or not it was previously requested. This list should be separate from your resume.

Three to five references is the typical range, with three being the most common number of references provided. At least two of the three should be work-related references, with the third possibly being a law school professor. Your references should be people who know you well and should be able to provide details about your qualifications and abilities. If you are applying to organizations or firms in the U.S., make sure that your references feel comfortable communicating in English.

Prior to preparing your list, you must check with your contacts to secure their agreement to serve as a positive reference and, as a courtesy, provide them with a copy of your resume. Check in periodically with your references to remind them that you are using them as a reference, to make sure they still agree to serve as a reference, and to provide them with an updated version of your resume (if applicable). If a particular employer requests references from you, reach out to notify them that they may be receiving a call or email from the employer. Giving the reference a few details about the employer and the type of job you are applying for will also assist your references in giving a helpful reference for you.

The list should include the following information: each reference's full name, occupation, and employer; a physical address for the employer; and a phone number and email address where

the reference can be reached. If your relationship to the reference is not apparent from the contact information (*i.e.*, the reference's employer does not appear anywhere on your resume), you should include a parenthetical explaining your connection to the reference. Appendix B of this Handbook provides a sample list of references.

It may be helpful to include your list of references with your cover letter and resume in your initial contact with an employer, especially if you think the employer might be familiar with one of your references. Make sure your name and contact information appears as part of the letterhead on your list of references. As with the cover letter, you should use the contact information from your resume (in the same format as on your resume) to use as a personal letterhead. Your list of references should be printed on the same paper you use to print your resume.

B. Letters of Recommendation

Typically, letters of recommendation are not required or requested unless you are applying for a judicial clerkship or a highly coveted position with an intergovernmental organization such as the United Nations. If an employer asks for letters of recommendation, they are seeking actual letters written by your references or other previous employers or professional contacts, attesting to your work ethic and abilities.

The people from whom you would seek a letter of recommendation are typically the same as those you would seek to list as references. Not unlike cover letters, letters of recommendation that are written for a specific position are generally much more effective and better received than generic cover letters addressed "To whom it may concern."

Letters of recommendation should speak in detail about the recommender's knowledge of your abilities. Letters where it is clear that the recommender only has a passing acquaintance with the candidate will not be well received. When you request a recommender to write a letter of recommendation, it will be helpful to include your resume, the name and address of the recipient; information about the position; and the deadline. Be sure to give the recommender as much time as possible to write the letter.

C. How to Ask Someone to Serve as a Reference or Write a Letter of Recommendation for You

It is important to approach people with great deference when asking someone to serve as a reference/recommender for you. Provide them with as much information as you can about your credentials, as well as your career goals, and ask them if they would kindly consider serving as a reference or writing a letter of recommendation for you. If you encounter resistance from any potential references/recommenders, it is probably best to seek a different person to serve in this role. You do not want a reviewer who is ambivalent about performing this duty; you want someone who is firmly on your side.

You should only ask people to serve as a reference or a recommender if they know you well and can speak to your abilities with detail and authority. Remember that you are asking a lot of someone when you do this—you are asking them to put their own credibility on the line in support of your candidacy for a position. Thus, it is important that you have a very positive

relationship with the person you are asking for a recommendation.

Your relationship to the reference/recommender is more important than the prestige of the person's position. So, for example, if you are seeking a reference from someone at a former employer, your most direct supervisor would probably be the best reference because that is the person who can speak most authoritatively and specifically about your abilities. A senior partner may sound more impressive, but if the person barely knew you, that will come across and the reference will be less effective.

IV. TRANSACTION LIST / DEAL SHEET

Experienced corporate attorneys may be asked to provide a transaction list, usually referred to as a "deal sheet." A deal sheet sets forth details of representative transactions you have worked on and gives a potential employer a more in-depth picture of your experience than a resume alone can provide.

Deal sheets are usually divided into sections by transaction type; the narrower your practice area, the narrower these categories will be. Be extremely cautious not to provide non-public information in a transaction list. If a transaction was not publicly announced (and most transactions are *not* publicly announced, even if they were reported by third parties in the news), you can provide a general description of the transaction without naming any of the parties involved. If your deal sheet describes transactions that you worked on while employed in another country, keep in mind that you will need to abide by client confidentiality conventions from your home country as well as those in the United States.

As with other application documents, you should copy your resume header to use as a header for this document. A sample deal sheet is attached as Appendix C to this Mini-Guide.

V. OTHER DOCUMENTS

It is rare for candidates to be asked for any documents other than a resume, cover letter, and the documents listed above (particularly for legal employment), however occasionally employers might ask for other items such as salary requirements. If you are asked for salary requirements or any other materials and you are unsure how to provide them, please feel free to reach out to the GPDP at gdpd@fordham.edu to discuss.

**APPENDIX A:
SAMPLE COVER SHEET FOR
WRITING SAMPLE**

CLARA SCHUMANN
10 W. 10th Street, Apt. 10
New York, NY 10010
917.555.1010
cwschumann@email.com

WRITING SAMPLE

The attached writing sample was submitted as the final writing assignment for the Fall 20XX Legal Writing and Research for LL.M. Students course at Fordham University School of Law, taught by Professor John Doe. The attached version is the original, unedited research memorandum that was submitted to Professor Doe.

-- OR --

Attached is a No Action Memorandum I researched and drafted while working as an intern at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. I am submitting the memorandum with the permission of my supervising attorney, John Doe. It has been edited slightly, and confidential information has been redacted.

-- OR --

The attached writing sample was submitted as a final paper for the Commercial Arbitration course taught by Professor Jane Doe at Fordham University School of Law. It has been edited slightly from the original version that was submitted to Professor Doe.

**APPENDIX B:
SAMPLE LIST OF
REFERENCES**

CLARA SCHUMANN
10 W. 10th Street, Apt. 10
New York, NY 10010
917.555.1010
cwschumann@email.com

REFERENCES

Prof. Johannes Brahms

Professor of Law
Albert-Ludwigs University of Freiburg
Fahnenbergplatz
79085 Freiburg, GERMANY
(+49) 761-203-0
brahms@freiburg.de

Michael Johnson

Partner
Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, LLP
51 Madison Avenue, 22nd Floor
New York, NY 10010
212-555-0000
michaeljohnson@quinnemanuel.com
(former Senior Associate at Shearman & Sterling LLP, Düsseldorf, Germany)¹

Sally Long

Associate Professor of Law
Fordham University School of Law
140 W. 62nd St.
New York, NY 10023
212-555-1234
slong@law.fordham.edu

¹ This parenthetical is listed to ensure that the reference's connection to the candidate is apparent.

**APPENDIX C:
SAMPLE TRANSACTION LIST**

LUCIANO PAVAROTTI
300 East 70th Street, Apt. 1G
New York, NY 10021
917.555.1234
lpavarotti@gmail.com

List of Representative Transactions

Securities:

- Represented X Corporation in registration of \$200 million of hybrid equity securities.
- Represented Y Corporation in universal shelf registration statement structured to include novel hybrid securities and subsequent take-down of debt under a \$200 million medium-term note plan.
- Represented Z Corporation, in separate issuances of \$150 million equity and \$50 million debt securities.
- Represented a telecommunications company in the uncompleted initial public offering of equity securities on NASDAQ.

Private Equity:

- Counsel to private equity sponsor in connection with a \$10 million offering of senior secured notes of portfolio company.
- Counsel to private equity portfolio company in connection with Form S-8 statements related to merger activities.

Banking and General Corporate:

- Senior Associate representing borrower in a \$100 million-dollar recapitalization and acquisition financing transaction.
- Represented a public healthcare company in an uncompleted merger with a private healthcare company.
- Represented a German institutional investor in its first venture capital investment in a U.S.-domiciled technology company.