

Fordham
Law School

New York, New York

GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

GPDP GUIDE TO
RESUME WRITING
FOR
LL.M. AND M.S.L. STUDENTS

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AND NON-J.D. PROGRAMS

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I. U.S.-Style Resume Overview

International LL.M. students must have a resume that conforms to the U.S. style. One of your strengths in the job market is your ability to move easily between two cultures, two legal systems, and multiple languages. If you do not conform your resume to the U.S. style, you undermine that quality – you show that you are not adjusted to the U.S. legal market.

Your resume often provides a prospective employer with the first view of you. An employer will consider the resume as a sample of your best work product. Your resume must be well-written, organized, consistent in formatting, and free of errors. It must also show your skills and substantive knowledge so that a prospective employer sees how you can add value.

A resume differs from a *curriculum vitae* (CV). A CV provides comprehensive background information, more like a full biography. In contrast, a resume provides selective details, tailored for a particular position. A CV can be multiple pages long. In the U.S., a resume is usually one page with brief descriptions of your relevant education and experience written in a persuasive and active voice.

To be effective, your resume must be easy to read. Busy hiring personnel will spend 15 seconds or less to get a sense of your qualifications. If something catches their attention, they are likely to read more thoroughly. If nothing stands out, then your application ends there.

Consider your resume as a marketing tool that places your experiences in the most favorable way. At the same time, honesty is crucial. Make the most of your background and experience without exaggerating any of it.

Before drafting your resume, reflect on your skills and qualities that make you a strong candidate for the position for which you are applying. In developing your resume, highlight those skills and qualities. As you draft your resume, make sure that it is understandable to someone with no experience of your home country's legal or educational system and to someone who is from your home country. Avoid translating a degree or award into English.

Think ahead to future interviews. Your resume will be the basis for an interviewer's questions, and you must be prepared to discuss anything that you included in your resume.

Your resume is an ongoing document that changes as you earn degrees, gain additional experience, and acquire new employers. Update your resume regularly to ensure that it is current and responds to specific positions for which you are applying.

II. Resume Templates

Appendix A contains two recommended LL.M. resume templates. The first one is a space-saving template that is designed to keep a longer resume from spilling over to a second page. The second one is for resumes that will not fill the whole page if the space-saving template is used. Appendix B contains two recommended M.S.L. templates. The first one is a space-saving template and the second one is for shorter resumes. Specific advice regarding the formatting and substance of your resume, as shown in the templates, is in Sections III and IV.

III. Resume Drafting

A. Overall Formatting Requirements

You must make sure that your resume is set up properly so that it is not rejected by ATS and AI filtering software and reaches hiring personnel.

Use:

- Microsoft Word
- U.S. letter size paper only. The U.S. does not use A4 paper size.
- 1” margins on all four sides.
- Times New Roman font in 11 pt on all text. Exception: 12 or 14 pt on your name. Arial font is also acceptable in 11 pt on all text with the exception of 12 or 14 pt on your name.
- Single space. Make sure you are not set for Multiple space or spacing any number of pts before and after.
- Align text to the left. Exception: center your heading (name and contact information).
- Small round bullets only. Do not use large bullets or any other symbols.
- Use bold on only the following: your name, section headings, school names, and employer names.
- Use italics on the following: sections under schools (such as Honors and Activities) and sections under additional information (such as languages and volunteer experience).
- Use italics or bold italics on job titles for positions with employers.

Do not use the following tools, symbols or formatting that will prevent your resume from passing through the scanner:

- ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Grammarly or any other AI writing assistance tools
- Horizontal underlining that extends across the page from margin to margin
- Vertical lines (|) or any other symbols. Exception: small round bullets as noted above
- Hyperlinks
- Columns; *i.e.*, do not shift dates to the right of the page.

B. Heading (Name and Contact Information)

Center your heading at the top of the page, in the body of your resume or the header area:

- Line 1: Your full name in bold in 12 or 14 pt
- Line 2: Your full Address, Phone, Email in that order in 11 pt, with each separated by four to five spaces; do not use any symbols to separate them. Do not include LinkedIn.

Address: Use only your local U.S. address. Format for your address: City, State, Zip Code. For the city of New York, use New York; do not abbreviate or use New York City. Abbreviate U.S. states using the post office abbreviations, such as NY for New York and NJ for New Jersey. Use a

comma and space between the city and state, and a space and no comma between the state and zip code.

Phone number: Use only your local U.S. phone number formatted as (111) 111-1111. Do not add +1 before the parenthesis.

Email address: We recommend that you use your Fordham email address for your resume and correspondence related to job search matters. If you use a different email address, make sure that it is professional. Do not hyperlink your email address; if your email address is hyperlinked automatically when you type it, remove the hyperlink by right clicking on it.

C. Section Headings

Your resume generally has four section headings, in this order: Bar Admissions, Education, Experience, and Additional Information. Use bold and all caps. Justify left.

D. Bar Admissions Section (use Admission if listing only one jurisdiction)

If you are planning to sit for the New York bar exam, put that information first; followed by your bar status in any other U.S. or foreign jurisdiction. If you are admitted to the bar of a particular jurisdiction, indicate the jurisdiction and the year of admission. For month and year, do not use a comma to separate them. Use these guidelines to enter your bar status on your resume.

Status	Resume Entry
You plan to sit for the NY bar exam	Intend to sit for the [Month and Year] New York Bar examination
You have taken the NY bar exam and are awaiting results	Sat for the [Month and Year] New York Bar examination (awaiting results)
You have passed the NY bar exam, but have not yet submitted your application for admission	Passed the [Month and Year] New York Bar examination
You have passed the NY bar exam and have submitted your application for admission but have not yet been approved by the Character and Fitness committee	New York (application pending)
You have passed the NY bar exam and the Character and Fitness evaluation, but have not yet been sworn in	New York (admission pending)
You have been sworn in and are admitted to practice in NY	New York [Year]

For a non-U.S. jurisdiction, you have fulfilled all requirements for admission except for an administrative formality (such as filing registration papers with a government agency)	Eligible for immediate admission to the bar of [jurisdiction]
For a non-U.S. jurisdiction that has no formal “admission” of attorneys.	Eligible to practice law in [jurisdiction] 2015.

E. Education Section

Include information for each of your university-level schools. Use reverse chronological order. You may omit nonrelevant non-degree programs or degree programs that you failed to complete, provided the omission does not leave a gap in your history. Do not include information about your primary or secondary school.

For each school, use the following general format:

- First line: School name in bold, followed by a comma, and school location in plain text [City, State OR City, Country].
- Second line: Your degree (including the program in which you received your degree), followed by a comma, and the month and year you expect your degree or you received your degree.
- Third line: May include Honors, Activities, Coursework (relevant to your job search), Thesis or Publications. Use italics or bold italics on these subheadings.

Current students will list Fordham first and your entry may look similar to this:

<p>Fordham University School of Law, New York, NY LL.M. in Banking, Corporate, and Finance Law, expected May 2026 <i>Honor: Fordham Journal of Corporate and Financial Law</i> <i>Activities: Student Bar Association, LL.M. Representative; Global Law Society, member</i></p>

Tips for your Fordham entry:

- Write Fordham as above. Do not use any abbreviated version.
- Double check the name of your LL.M. or M.S.L. program for correct spelling and punctuation. Do not spell the degree as “L.L.M.” There is no period after the first “L.”
- The graduation date for students completing studies in December is February. For students completing studies in April/May, the graduation date is May. For students completing studies during summer semester, the graduation date is September.
- If you are a part-time student, you may include that information in parentheses after the name of your degree program: LL.M. in Banking, Corporate, and Finance Law (part-time), expected February 2026

After the Fordham entry, list your other degrees in reverse chronological order, using the same general format and keeping in mind the following:

- **School name:** If the school name is not in English, you may want to use an English translation. Check the school’s English language website to see whether it indicates a preferred English translation.

- **School location:**

U.S. Schools: List city, state. Use the two-letter U.S. postal service abbreviation for states. For example: Boston, MA

Schools Outside the U.S.: List city, country. Do not abbreviate country names. Exception: you may use “UK” for United Kingdom. Do not list the province or region. Exception: Canadian provinces may be abbreviated and you may exclude the country.

- **Degree:** Abbreviate your degree when possible. Examples: LL.M., LL.B., M.S.L. If there is no abbreviation, write out the degree name. Do not translate your non-U.S. degree or use “J.D. equivalent.” Translating or drawing equivalence creates confusion and may be misleading and inaccurate. Instead, use the degree’s language in italics and describe the degree in a parenthesis. Example: *Magister* (five-year law degree). For languages that do not use the Roman alphabet, use the original characters, followed by a transliteration and translation, with a parenthetical description.

If you received a Latin honor with your degree (*summa cum laude, magna cum laude or cum laude*), include the honor with your degree. Use italics. Place a comma after the degree and before the graduation date. Example: LL.B., *cum laude*, 2024.

- **Month and Year that you expect or received your degree:** Do not use a comma between the month and year. Do not include your dates of attendance.
- **Honors:** List honors on the line after your degree. An honor is anything for which you were competitively selected. Examples: scholarship or journal membership. Use “Honor” if you list only one.
- **Activities:** List activities on the line after your honors. An activity includes any club or association in which you participated without being competitively selected. Use “Activity” if you list only one.
- **Grades:** If your grades place you at or near the top of your class, you may include them. List them on the line above Honors. You must put them in context. State how your grades place you in relation to your peers or in relation to a fixed scale if no comparison to your peers is available). Examples: GPA: 4.0/4.0. Class Rank: 10/215. Class Standing: Top 10%.

- **Other Categories:** You may also include entries for other categories such as Thesis, Publications, and Coursework. Consider whether the information is relevant to the type of positions that you are seeking.

F. Experience Section

This section should contain all relevant work experience, paid or unpaid, including full-time and part-time jobs, internships, externships, and substantial volunteer activities. List your experience in reverse chronological order. For each employer or organization, use the following format:

- First line: Employer or organization name in bold, followed by a comma, and location in plain text [City, State OR City, Country].
- Second line: Your title or position in italics or bold italics, followed by a comma, and the dates in plain text. List a range of dates by month and year, from the start date to the end date, separating the dates by a dash. Make sure that your dashes are consistent. If the job is ongoing, the dates should be from the start date to present. Do not put a comma between the month and the year. Use a consistent format. Examples: August 2024 – present. May 2020 – July 2024.

Here are some considerations regarding your title or position:

- If you worked in a specific department and that information is relevant, you may include it after the title or position, separated by a comma and italicized.
- Indicate in parentheses that a position is part-time or temporary, when that information is not clear from the title. Example: Junior Attorney (part-time).
- If you have two or more internships and they obscure your long-term employment positions, you may consider moving them into a separate section called “Internships.” Since those experiences are typically only a few months each, U.S. employers may be concerned about the short duration unless it is clear that they were intended to be temporary positions.
- Be careful about translating your title or position into English. Like your degree, your translation may be confusing, misleading and failing to convey the information that you intend. Consider these descriptions of titles in the U.S. when trying to determine the one that fits your role.

Legal Assistant: A legal assistant is a secretary or administrative assistant to a lawyer. Tasks include answering phones, making photocopies, and scheduling appointments. And tasks generally do not include legal work.

Paralegal: A paralegal performs administrative tasks that may require legal knowledge. Tasks may include organizing and submitting court documents or regulatory filings, managing case files, and collecting and analyzing documents. A paralegal may have a bachelor’s degrees or a paralegal degree; some may have no formal training.

Legal Intern: A legal intern works at a law firm or other organization doing legal work while attending law school.

Law Clerk: A law clerk has graduated from law school, not yet been admitted to practice law, and performs work similar to a junior lawyer.

Judicial Clerk: A judicial clerk, who works in a judge’s chambers performing legal tasks, has graduated from law school and may or may not be admitted to practice law.

Attorney or Lawyer: An attorney or lawyer is fully admitted to practice law in their jurisdiction and is authorized to give legal advice to clients.

The third line in your listing for each position is the description of the tasks that you performed in that role. Your description must communicate specific skills and substance. Start with a strong active verb that best describes the skill and follow with a specific description of the task. Never use first person (“I,” “my,” “me,” “we,” or “our”).

- Example: Researched and drafted legal briefs and memoranda regarding copyright and trademark issues.
- Example: Drafted and negotiated documents in connection with private equity transactions including share and asset purchase agreements and shareholder agreements.

Both examples provided specific strong verbs and details. See the Appendix C for a list of action verbs.

As you put together your job description, consider the order of entries. Think of an inverted pyramid (▼), where you put the most significant and substantive task first and each following task is less and less significant as you approach the point of the pyramid. To determine the order, consider the requirements of the position you are seeking and your tasks that are relevant. For the 15 seconds or less that employer initially takes to review your resume, you must quickly draw their attention to what you have to offer so that they continue reading.

If your description is short, use the paragraph format, shown below. For longer descriptions, more than six or seven lines, use bullet points. Instead of having a single item in each bullet, we recommend grouping related items in the same bullet and using a period between each item in that bullet.

Paragraph Format

White & Case LLP, Milan, Italy

Associate Attorney, Corporate Transactions Group, September 2020 – August 2024

Advised clients on transnational corporate transactions, particularly cross-border mergers and acquisitions. Drafted stock and asset purchase agreements and shareholder agreements. Conducted due diligence.

Bullet Format

White & Case, Milan Italy

Associate, September 2020 – August 2024

- Drafted and negotiated stock and asset purchase agreements and shareholder agreements for cross-border mergers and acquisitions. Advised clients. Conducted due diligence.
- Advised clients on joint ventures.

G. Additional Information Section

In this section, you may include information on specific skills or activities that do not belong in any other section on your resume. Use subheadings that are italicized and followed by a colon. You can separate items within each subheading with a period or semi-colon. Subheadings that you may decide to include in Additional Information are:

- **Languages:** List your languages starting with English, followed by your native language, and then add any other languages. Include your level of proficiency in parentheses and use fluent, native or proficient. List a language only if you would be able to engage in a job interview in that language. Do not list any language where your skills are basic or conversational unless the language is particularly unique.
- **Publications:** Include full and correct citations for your publications. If you have many publications, you may wish to select a few that are particularly relevant. In that case, call the section “Selected Publications” to indicate that you have published more extensively. In some cases, you may wish to make this a separate section on your resume.
- **Lectures:** Include significant presentations that are relevant. In some cases, you may wish to make this a separate section.
- **Volunteer Experience:** Include volunteer work other than the legal experience listed in the “Experience” section.
- **Professional Licenses:** Include relevant licenses other than legal licenses.
- **Memberships:** Include memberships in bar associations or other professional organizations, especially if you are an active member.
- **Interests:** We recommend not including interests. Employers are most interested in the skills and substantive knowledge that you have to offer. So, consider whether an employer may regard your interests as a distraction from your commitment to practicing law. However, include interests only if you have space on your resume, you are or have been actively engaged in them, and they are not generic such as reading, travel or music. You can make generic interests more specific by adding a detail such as reading biographies, adventure travel, or playing piano. Do not include hobbies such as going to the gym or working out, going to movies or trying new foods.

H. Items Not to Include on Your Resume

Do not include the following information on or with your resume:

- **Photograph:** Under state and federal laws on nondiscrimination in employment practices, it is illegal for employers to require photographs.
- **Employment objective:** Legal resumes do not contain an objective section.
- **References:** Do not include either references or the phrase “References furnished upon request.” Prepare and have available, upon request, a separate document titled “References.”
- **Personal data:** Omit personal data such as height, weight, marital status, gender, religious affiliation, birth date or place of birth.
- **Computer skills:** Employers assume that you possess basic computer skills, including experience with the Microsoft Office suite, as well as research skills using Lexis, Westlaw, and Bloomberg.
- **Other Skills:** Do not include skills such as being organized, hardworking, detail oriented, or motivated. Demonstrate these qualities throughout your resume and in your cover letter by the way that you describe your experience

IV. Additional Considerations

A. Drafting Tips

- Do not abbreviate words or use acronyms in your descriptions unless they are widely known in the legal community, such as FINRA or SEC. Always use the full names of countries unless they are commonly known, such as U.S. or U.K.
- Consider whether to include activities or interests that reveal sensitive information, such as religious or political views.
- If you email your resume, convert it to PDF format, unless the employer specifically requests another format. After converting to PDF, check to make sure that the formatting has not changed. And make sure that the file name contains only your name and the word “resume.”
- For specific tips on writing a resume for a public interest job search, review PIRC's *Public Service Job Search Guide*.
- Proofread. Then proofread again. Then have a friend proofread. Then have your resume reviewed by the GPDP.

B. Common Mistakes

Here are a few mistakes that we often see. Double-check your resume to ensure that you do not make these errors:

- Do not use an ampersand (&) unless it is part of a proper noun, such as Smith & Co.
- Do not use “etc.”
- Be sure that you use the correct preposition, such as “in,” “on,” “of,” and “for.” Prepositions can be tricky, so carefully double-check all of your prepositions.
- Use U.S.-style capitalization. Different countries have different rules for when things should be capitalized. Be sure that you are following U.S. rules of capitalization.
- Use U.S. spellings. Be sure that the spell check feature on your computer is set to U.S. English.
- Italicize non-English words on your resume.
- Be consistent in your use of commas. Choose whether always to place your comma before “and” in a list (red, yellow, and green) or always to omit the comma in a list (red, yellow and green).
- The plural of “memorandum” is “memoranda.” Do not shorten “memorandum” to “memo” in a resume.
- The plural of “research” is “research” when it is used as a noun.
- The plural of “due diligence” is “due diligence” when it is used as a noun.
- Resumes are not signed.
- A legal “opinion” in the U.S. is a specific type of document that attaches liability to the law firm issuing the opinion. When you draft a document for a client informing them about the law in a particular area, it is called a memorandum.

C. Finishing Your Resume

Expect to write several drafts before you finalize your resume. If your initial draft is longer than one page, you have to begin the process of editing it. In the course of editing, you are likely to find better and more succinct ways to describe your experience and a more effective order in which to put your descriptions. And you may also determine that some items are more relevant to include than others.

Once you have completed a draft of your resume, send a Word version for review to gdp@law.fordham.edu. You can also schedule an appointment to discuss your resume and other career matters at gdp@law.fordham.edu.

APPENDIX A

1 – Space-saving LL.M. Resume Template to keep longer resumes to one page

2 – Extra-spacing LL.M. Resume Template for shorter resumes

NAME
City, State zip code Phone email (without hyperlink)

BAR ADMISSIONS

Plan to take the [February or July year] New York Bar exam; include any other bar admissions

EDUCATION (For each school, other possible subheadings: Coursework, Publications, Thesis)

Fordham University School of Law, New York, NY

LL.M. in , expected date

Honors:

Activities:

School Name, City, State or Country

Degree, date

Honors:

Activities:

EXPERIENCE

Employer Name, City, State or Country

Job Title, dates

Description in paragraph form if your job description is shorter than six or seven paragraphs

OR

Employer Name, City, State or Country

Job Title, dates

- Use bullets if your job description is longer than six or seven paragraphs
- Second bullet
- Third bullet
- Try to use only 3 bullets (combine related items into a single bullet). Do not use 1 or 2 bull

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Below are some possible items to include in this section)

Languages: (put English first; for each language indicate fluent, native or proficient)

Volunteer Experience:

Memberships:

NAME
City, State zip code Phone email (without hyperlink)

BAR ADMISSIONS

Plan to take the [February or July year] New York Bar exam; include any other bar admissions

EDUCATION (For each school, other possible subheadings: Coursework, Publications, Thesis)

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, New York, NY

LL.M. in , expected date

Honors:

Activities:

SCHOOL NAME, City, State or Country

Degree, date

Honors:

Activities:

EXPERIENCE

EMPLOYER NAME, City, State or Country

Job Title, dates

Description in paragraph form if your job description is shorter than six or seven paragraphs

OR

EMPLOYER NAME, City, State or Country

Job Title, dates

- Use bullets if your job description is longer than six or seven paragraphs
- Second bullet
- Third bullet
- Try to use only 3 bullets (combine related items into a single bullet). Do not use 1 or 2 bullets.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Below are some possible items to include in this section)

Languages:

Volunteer Experience:

Memberships:

APPENDIX B

- 1 – Space-saving M.S.L. Resume Template to keep longer resumes to one page
- 2 – Extra-spacing M.S.L. Resume Template for shorter resumes

NAME
City, State zip code Phone email (without hyperlink)

EDUCATION (For each school, other possible subheadings: Coursework, Publications, Thesis)

Fordham University School of Law, New York, NY

M.S.L. in , expected date

Honors:

Activities:

School Name, City, State or Country

Degree, date

Honors:

Activities:

EXPERIENCE

Employer Name, City, State or Country

Job Title, dates

Description in paragraph form if your job description is shorter than six or seven paragraphs

OR

Employer Name, City, State or Country

Job Title, dates

- Use bullets if your job description is longer than six or seven paragraphs
- Second bullet
- Third bullet
- Try to use only 3 bullets (combine related items into a single bullet). Do not use 1 or 2 bullets.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Below are some possible items to include in this section)

Languages:

Volunteer Experience:

Memberships:

NAME
City, State zip code Phone email (without hyperlink)

EDUCATION (For each school, other possible subheadings: Coursework, Publications, Thesis)

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, New York, NY

M.S.L. in , expected date

Honors:

Activities:

SCHOOL NAME, City, State or Country

Degree, date

Honors:

Activities:

EXPERIENCE

EMPLOYER NAME, City, State or Country

Job Title, dates

Description in paragraph form if your job description is shorter than six or seven paragraphs

OR

EMPLOYER NAME, City, State or Country

Job Title, dates

- Use bullets if your job description is longer than six or seven paragraphs
- Second bullet
- Third bullet
- Try to use only 3 bullets (combine related items into a single bullet). Do not use 1 or 2 bullets.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Below are some possible items to include in this section)

Languages:

Volunteer Experience:

Memberships:

APPENDIX C
ACTION VERBS

ACTION VERBS: Use the following action verbs to describe past or present job experiences:

accelerate	close	elect	increase	perform	scrutinize
accomplish	combine	employ	indicate	persuade	seek
account for	communicate	encourage	initiate	pioneer	select
achieve	compare	enjoy	innovate	place	sent
acquire	Complete	enlarge	inspect	plan	serve
add	compose	enlist	instruct	play	set
adjust	conceive	ensure	insure	police	ship
administer	conclude	enter	interpret	prepare	show
advise	conditioned	establish	interview	present	sift
aide	conduct	estimate	introduce	prevail	simplify
analyze	Construct	evaluate	investigate	process	smooth
anticipate	continue	excel	join	produce	solve
apply	contract	execute	kept	profit	spearhead
appoint	control	exercise	labor	program	specify
appraise	convince	expand	launch	prohibit	speak
arbitrate	coordinate	expedite	lecture	project	study
argue	copy	explain	lead	promote	submit
arrange	correct	explore	license	proof	suggest
assess	counsel	familiarize	locate	prove	summarize
assist	count	file	look	purchase	supervise
assume	craft	finance	made	put	support
assure	create	forecast	maintain	qualified	surmount
attend	critique	foresaw	manage	quicken	survey
author	dealt	formulate	map out	ran	target
authorize	debate	forward	maximize	rate	teach
award	decide	foster	meet	realize	test
began	define	found	modify	receive	tighten
bolster	delegate	gain	monitor	recognize	take over
boost	deliver	gather	motivate	recommend	total
bought	demonstrate	give	move	reduce	tour
brief	design	grade	name	relate	track
brought	determine	greet	negotiate	renovate	train
budget	develop	grossed	net	report	transfer
built	devise	guide	observe	rescue	transform
calculate	did	handle	open	research	translate
catalog	digest	hasten	operate	result in	travel
caught	diminish	heighten	order	return	treat
cause	direct	help	organize	reveal	tutor
chair	discover	highlight	overcome	review	type
change	draft	identify	oversee	revise	uncover
check	dramatize	implement	pay	said	update
chose	drew up	improve	paint	save	welcome
classify	earn	include	participate	see	work
clear up	edit	incorporate	perceive	screen	write