

**Boston University School of Law
Graduate and International Programs
Professional Development**

LL.M Alumni Job Search Handbook

I. INTRODUCTION

Regardless of whether you are embarking on your first post-graduate job search or looking to change jobs, the most important first step in finding a job in the U.S. is **networking**. While many jobs are advertised, either on the website of a given company, firm, or agency, or via an online job search portal, just as many - if not more - jobs are *not* advertised, or are pre-advertised by word-of-mouth. To maximize your opportunities in a competitive job market, you must be serious and focused about both searching and networking. The most effective way to do this is to **make a thoughtful networking plan**.

Your networking plan should focus on the journey of your search, rather than the destination: your goal is to build and expand your network. The most efficient process is first to spend time considering your interests and skills, preferred geographic area, and the substantive knowledge that you have gained through your prior work experiences, life experiences, and academic studies. Once you have analyzed these considerations, focus on how to make new connections that align with those factors.

As an LL.M alum it is also crucial that you **think strategically about your place in the job market**. If you have an LL.M degree and a first degree of law from another country, you should think about employers or types of jobs that are the best fit with your language skills and/or legal experience. Rather than compete “head on” with JD students for U.S. law firm associate positions, find U.S. employers who would benefit from your unique skills. LL.M alumni who can convince employers that their bi-lingual, bi-cultural attributes can help meet the employer’s business needs, and who focus on researching and networking, will significantly improve their chances of finding a job in the U.S. Strategic job searching might include researching and contacting:

- U.S. companies and law firms that do a substantial amount of business in your home country
- Home country companies that do a substantial amount of business in the U.S. (or the U.S. law firms they use)
- U.S. companies and law firms who have hired people with your background in the past.

Plan to put a great deal of time and effort into any job search. Treat your networking plan and job search as a full-time job in itself. Use your calendar as a tool to plan daily steps and keep track of the amount of time between making initial contacts and following-up with those contacts.

II. NETWORKING

A. BU Resources – Professional Development Office, Fellow Alums, Professors

The first step in building your career network is to stay connected with the Office of Graduate and International Programs and, in particular, with the Office of Professional Development. When you graduate, check out the [BU Law alumni website](#), and make sure you [update your information](#) there. Also, let us know where you are working and how you found your job by emailing Claire Lee, Associate Director of Professional Development, at clee7@bu.edu. Second, increase your network by joining the [BU alumni online community](#) to get access to the entire BU alumni database. As you move or change jobs, remember to update your information in the database. Use your BU email address to keep in contact with your classmates and other alumni that you meet throughout your networking efforts. Make the most of your connection to BU by joining specific [alumni committees and groups](#). Offer to participate in alumni panels and be a resource for existing LL.M students.

Also, reach out to professors from your BU LL.M program. Many of your professors work a full-time job during the day, and can serve as knowledgeable resources in terms of your career development. Research your professors, and reach out to them for advice.

B. LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the major networking resource and an *essential* job search tool for lawyers and law students. If you have not already done so, set up a free account using an email address that you check frequently, and use it to connect to people and groups, such as BU Law's LL.M [LinkedIn Alumni Group](#). You can also use LinkedIn to learn about employers and search the job postings. Make sure that your profile includes a professional photo and a complete, yet concise, description of your current job status, and your academic and employment background. Use keywords – such as a particular language, country, job title, or practice area – prominently in your profile summary. This will help recruiters and employers see your LinkedIn profile as they use keywords to search for potential employees. You can also “follow” companies/firms that are on your target list so that their job postings show up in your newsfeed.

You can easily search for alumni from any school you have attended by location and practice area using the LinkedIn Alumni search tool. To do so, search for the school you would like to use (e.g., “Boston University School of Law”) in the search bar at the top of your homepage (you can also click on the school's name if it is listed in your personal profile). This will take you to the school's official LinkedIn page, where you can search for alumni with various filters that cover everything from where they work to what they do.

C. Industry Groups and Bar Associations; Focus on Sections Relating to Areas of Interest

Bar and other professional associations provide key networking opportunities. Many bar associations have “Young/New Attorney” committees or sections and offer free or reduced membership rates. Some bar associations also post job and internship opportunities. Some relevant associations include the following:

- American Bar Association (ABA): www.americanbar.org and www.abaforlawstudents.com
- Massachusetts Bar Association (MBA): www.massbar.org
- Boston Bar Association (BBA): www.bostonbar.org
- International Bar Association (IBA): www.ibanet.org
- New York City Bar Association: www.nycbar.org
- Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts: <https://wbawbf.org>
- Asian American Bar Association of New York: <https://www.aabany.org/>
- International Association of Korean Lawyers: www.iakl.us
- Chinese Business Lawyers Association: <http://cblalaw.org>
- National Arab American Bar Association: <https://www.arabamericanbar.org/>

For LL.M alumni seeking jobs specifically within the banking and financial industries, the American Bar Association's Banking Law Committee offers many resources for practitioners looking to learn more about banking law and stay informed of new developments. You can subscribe to their newsletters and connect with other Banking Law Committee members. The Committee also hosts an annual stand-alone meeting in Washington DC that would be worthwhile in terms of content and networking

opportunities. For details, see https://www.americanbar.org/groups/business_law/committees/banking/. In addition, the BBA has several Financial Services Committees, including the Banking Committee. For more information, see <https://bostonbar.org/sections-forums/sections/financial-services>.

D. Informational Interviews

Conducting informational interviews is an important, interactive way to expand your network, learn more about jobs in your area of interest, uncover unlisted jobs, and clarify your professional goals. The purpose of an informational interview is to get information. This meeting/call is not a job interview – the purpose is to seek advice and information, make a connection with a legal professional, and ideally get additional names from them to further expand your network. Be positive and engaged in your interactions and you will be more likely to elicit a positive response.

To set up an informational interview, write a brief, professional email that states:

- Your connection to this contact (e.g., fellow BU alum, someone you met at a networking event)
- Your current status (e.g., graduate of the international BU LL.M program and your current position, if applicable)
- Your professional interests and how they connect with this contact
- Your desire to set up a brief informational interview - in person or by phone

If you do not hear back within a week or two, call or email your contact to briefly follow-up, which gives the impression that you are motivated and proactive in your career development. Many people will be happy to schedule a meeting or call with you. However, occasionally people will decline your invitation (or simply fail to respond to your one or two messages). In the event that they decline to meet or speak with you, thank them for their time and move on to your next potential contact. If they fail to reply, you should treat their silence as declining your invitation and move on as well.

Once you are able to schedule a meeting, do your research on the individual and their firm, and consider the information that you would like to learn from them. Prepare a list of open-ended questions that will lead to further conversation (e.g., questions about your contact's career, the job market, advice regarding next steps that you can take, etc.).

After your meeting, remember to send an email thanking your contact for their time. Keep a spreadsheet of all of your contacts and take notes on any conversations. Schedule a time and reason to follow up with your contact in the future. Maintain the relationship!

E. Volunteering

A number of graduates have gained permanent employment by doing pro bono (work done for the public good for free) work. Volunteering is an excellent way to work alongside current legal practitioners and stay connected with the legal community while you conduct your job search. Volunteering also increases your marketability by sharpening your legal skills and your functional understanding of a specific area. In addition, you can list your volunteer experience as a work credential on your resume. Pro bono and volunteer opportunities are posted regularly on psjd.org, idealist.org, the [BBA website](#), massprobono.org/ as well as many other sites. In addition, plan to attend the pro bono recruitment fair at Suffolk Law School,

which usually occurs in the fall. It is a local pro bono internship and job fair where you can meet representatives from Boston-area legal services organizations and learn more about volunteer opportunities.

F. Stay Informed

Regardless of your particular area of interest, it is wise to stay as informed as possible about the current and future state of the U.S. and global legal market so you can have meaningful and in-depth conversations with practitioners, as well as knowledge of practice areas that are growing or shrinking. Staying informed can be crucial for strategic professional development. Check these recourses regularly:

- [Above the Law](#)
- [The Wall Street Journal's Law blog](#)
- [Firsthand](#)
- [Glassdoor](#)
- [China Law Blog](#)
- [The Financial Times](#)
- [The Business Lawyer](#)
- [Business Law Today](#)
- [ABA Journal List of Banking Law Blogs](#)

III. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Visa & Bar Issues

This job search guide assumes that you are authorized to work permanently in the U.S. If that is not the case, be advised that you may be limited by your visa status. Large numbers of U.S. employers, such as the government and small and mid-sized firms, are either prohibited from employing foreign nationals or cannot support visa applications for them. The one sector that has traditionally sponsored H1-B visas for foreign students – large law firms – has experienced a significant drop in these sponsorships in recent years, as H1-B visa availability is now outstripped by the number of H1-B visa applications. Since H1-B visas are allocated through a lottery system, there is no guarantee that you will actually receive one, even if your employer is willing to sponsor you.

In addition to visa limitations, LL.M graduates may be limited by state bar requirements. Legal employers usually expect permanent associates to be admitted to the state bar in which they will be practicing. It can take up to six months to receive bar exam results, and many months after that to submit all bar admission documents and receive your bar license.

B. The Legal Market for LL.Ms

Educate yourself about the range of opportunities available to LL.Ms so that you can have realistic expectations and target employers effectively. The U.S. legal market is competitive, and LL.M graduates are often vying for the same jobs as JDs – even unpaid positions. Networking skills, fluency in English,

strong LL.M grades and recommendations, and prior legal experience are all important predictors of success for an LL.M candidate seeking a U.S. legal job.

Some positions are particularly difficult for a foreign-trained LL.M to obtain. Associate positions at large domestic, and even international, law firms (for both new graduates and lateral hires), and in-house attorney positions, are *extremely* competitive, even for U.S. citizens who have JDs, and most require lawyers to be admitted to the state bar in which the office is located. In-house positions often require several years of prior relevant practice experience with a law firm. In addition, the U.S. government is rarely able to employ non-U.S. citizens. Therefore, it is suggested that you think broadly as you begin your search. The following is a list of additional types of jobs to consider:

- Positions with U.S. non-profit organizations (check PSJD and Idealist)
- Paralegal roles (especially where there is a need for particular foreign language skills)
- Attorney positions with small- to medium-sized firms (e.g., boutique law firms specializing in your area of interest or firms serving a clientele relevant to your skills and experience)
- Compliance careers (usually do not require bar admission; use recruiters and staffing agencies)
- International opportunities with organizations such as the UN, the World Bank Group, the World Trade Organization, and others (check <https://unjobs.org/>).

For LL.Ms seeking jobs within the banking and financial industries, compliance careers are a good option since they do not always require a JD or bar admission. Many types of firms hire compliance professionals: banks and financial institutions, securities firms (brokerage firms, asset managers, hedge funds, private equity firms), consulting firms (such as the Big 4: PwC, Deloitte, EY and KPMG), trade and industry associations, and exchanges. In addition, large international organizations, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Inter-American Development Bank may have opportunities for LL.Ms.

Some U.S. law firms recruit foreign-trained lawyers for their short-term Visiting Lawyer or Foreign Associate Programs. While the hiring process for these particular roles typically occurs about a year in advance of the start date and usually follows law school recruiting timelines rather than lateral hiring on shorter timelines, it is worth researching law firms that maintain a capacity for hiring foreign-trained lawyers for networking purposes. See [Visiting Lawyer/Foreign Associate Programs at US Law Firms](#).

Finally, some regions or cities in the U.S. may offer advantages to LL.Ms with certain language skills or knowledge. For example, Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking alumni are advised to pay particular attention to Miami, Florida (a city that is euphemistically referred to as “the financial capital of Latin America”). Many U.S. law firms have Latin American practice areas in their Miami offices and the number is growing.

IV. SEARCH FOR POSTED JOBS

In addition to networking, it is important to regularly check for and timely apply to posted jobs. As a BU LL.M alum, you have continued access to your BU Law CareerHub account (CareerHub has replaced Symplicity. Contact the LL.M Professional Development Office if you need login information for CareerHub). This database is regularly updated with current pro bono and job opportunities.

A. Online Resources

In addition to BU resources, you should check the sites below for employment opportunities. These sites are typically searchable by geographic region, employer, or type of employment. You may also set up email alerts for regular updates.

- **LinkedIn** – <https://www.linkedin.com/>. The major networking and job online resource and an *essential* job search tool. Set up a free account and use it to connect to people and groups (such as BU Law’s [LLM Alumni Group](#)) and learn about employers and jobs. You can also “follow” companies/firms that are on your target list so that their job postings show up in your newsfeed.
- **Indeed** – www.indeed.com. One of the largest and most comprehensive job posting databases, containing opportunities of every type across the U.S.
- **Idealist** – www.idealists.org. Find many volunteer opportunities, nonprofit jobs, internships, and organizations focused on public interest work.
- **NALP (National Association for Law Placement)** – www.nalp.org. An extensive online directory that lists jobs and internships and has in-depth information about employers both in the U.S. and abroad. You can search for opportunities that are specifically for domestic or foreign LL.Ms.
- **PSJD (Public Service Jobs Directory)** – www.PSJD.org. A comprehensive resource that includes job listings for public interest law, both nationally and internationally.
- **Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly** – www.masslawyersweekly.com. In addition to providing news and updates about legal issues impacting New England lawyers, this newspaper has local legal job listings.
- **Internships.com** -- www.internships.com. An internship “marketplace” that lists internship opportunities throughout the country.
- **WayUp** -- <https://www.wayup.com/>. An online resource for early-career candidates that lists internships and jobs throughout the country.
- **Legal Job websites** - Other job posting websites specifically for attorney jobs which offer job alerts: <https://lawjobs.com/>, www.lawcrossing.com and www.hg.org/law-jobs.asp.
- **Job posting websites that offer job alerts to members** - www.monster.com, www.simplyhired.com and www.careerbuilder.com.
- **Craigslist** – www.craigslist.com. This can be a good resource to find “outside of the box” legal or law-related jobs, such as contract or temporary work.
- **Findlaw** – <https://careers.findlaw.com/>. In addition to job postings, FindLaw also has an employer research section.
- **American Bar Association (ABA)** – www.americanbar.org. International LL.Ms should consider joining the International Section (https://www.americanbar.org/groups/international_law/). There are also special sections for international business lawyers and banking lawyers. Also, check out <https://abaforlawstudents.com/start-your-legal-career/entry-level-legal-jobs/>
- **Massachusetts Bar Association (MBA)** - www.massbar.org/. The MBA has a Young Lawyers Division <http://access.massbar.org/communities/community-home?CommunityKey=15c7e2fa-3097-4b89-8914-7aae8bcac547>.
- **Boston Bar Association (BBA)** - <http://www.bostonbar.org/>. Membership in the BBA offers many opportunities and benefits, including membership in individual sections such as the Financial Services Section and admittance to networking and social events – a great way to build your contacts.

- **International Bar Association (IBA)** -- www.ibanet.org. The IBA has many sections, committees and regional forums, including for law students, banking law, and lawyers from Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- **New York City Bar Association** – www.nycbar.org. Jobs postings can be found at: <http://1.ny.nyc.associationcareernetwork.com/jobseeker/search/results/>.
- **American Foreign Law Association** – www.afla-law.org
- **Handshake** – <https://bu.joinhandshake.com/login>.
- **American Society of International Law (ASIL)** - ASIL publishes “Careers in International Law: A Guide to Career Paths in International Law.”
- **USA.jobs** – www.usajobs.gov for federal government jobs.
- **Go Big Law** - <https://www.gobiglaw.com/> for listings from larger firms.
- **Special Counsel** - <https://www.specialcounsel.com/legal-jobs> for legal consulting and attorney recruiting.
- **Jobline, Association of Corporate Counsel** - <https://jobline.acc.com/jobs> for in-house positions.

B. Legal Recruiters

There are a number of legal contract agencies that specialize in short-term or temporary law-related work. While these agencies are often seeking to fill positions that require a candidate to be licensed in the U.S., many companies may also list legal positions, such as paralegal or compliance roles, which do not require bar membership. The following is a list of some of the legal contract agencies in the Boston and New York areas:

- **Robert Half Legal** - <https://www.roberthalf.com/>
- **Beacon Hill Staffing** - <https://beaconhillstaffing.com/>
- **Legility (formerly Counsel on Call)** - <https://www.legility.com/>

V. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Below is a brief summary of each step of the job application process. The Office of Professional Development is available to provide individual consultations, applicable resources, and answer specific questions.

A. Update Your Resume

Your current or most recent legal experience, whether a paid legal job or a pro bono volunteer position, should appear at the top of the Experience section, and that section should be at the top of your resume. Now that you are no longer a student, the Education section of your resume moves to the bottom. Following the completion of your degree, the focus of your resume is your work experience, which should take up the bulk of the page. If you have taken, passed, or gained admission to any state bar, this information should be included in a separate Bar Status section at the top or bottom of your resume. The Office of Professional Development is available to provide resume reviews for BU LL.M alumni, and

can provide a copy of our LL.M U.S. Resume Handbook and U.S. Resume Template if you are just getting started drafting your resume.

B. Write a Cover Letter

A freshly drafted, *one-page* cover letter should be prepared for each position to which you apply. A well-drafted cover letter will highlight your specific “hard” (direct legal) and “soft” (professional and behavioral) skills that correlate to the skills that are listed in the job description (or are based on information gleaned from research about the firm and similar roles), and will clearly express how you are the ideal fit for the role. Just as in your job search, you must think *strategically* about your skills, experiences, and unique strengths, and communicate them in your letter in an *engaging and concise manner*. The Professional Development office is available to review and provide guidance on drafting cover letters for BU LL.M alumni seeking assistance.

C. Practice Interviewing

Prepare and practice your “elevator pitch” – a 1-2 minute introduction to who you are (*i.e.*, a graduate of an LL.M program at BU Law with a background in [fill in the blank] and a first law degree from [country]), what you are looking to do, and how you are qualified. Be prepared to answer questions about everything on your resume and other general interview questions, such as questions about your strengths and weaknesses, with descriptive details and examples. BU LL.M alumni looking for more in-depth interview guidance are welcome to make an appointment with the Professional Development Office for a mock interview or for answers to specific questions about how to prepare for an interview. Remember to send a thank you email after each interview!

Note to Alumni who are U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents

If you have a JD from a U.S. law school, and are permanently authorized to work in the U.S., you are in a somewhat different situation from international LL.M alumni. While you do not face the same hurdles relating to visa and work authorization issues, you also do not offer any foreign-trained advantages (such as business contacts in a different country or familiarity with foreign legal systems) to potential employers. Although a more extensive training in the U.S. legal system may be attractive to some employers, you should not rely on your JD to land a position. Instead, the more critical element of employment may be the linkage between your LL.M program and prior experience. Demonstrating relevant legal skills through employment history, combined with relevant interest and focus through your work in the LL.M program, will increase your chances of finding employment opportunities, including at mid-level firms, financial institutions or consulting firms. Unlike international alumni, domestic alumni will have greater success finding employment opportunities with federal, state or local governments.