

Legal Issues

Playing Fair...

Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Job Seeker

by the National Association of Colleges and Employers
Principles for Professional Conduct Committee

Choosing and attaining meaningful post-graduation employment is an important challenge for college students. To aid this process, your career center and employers develop connections and programs, such as on-campus recruiting, resume referral services, and job fairs, in which you and your fellow students are active participants. In order for this process to be successful, everyone involved must work together. NACE's Principles for Professional Conduct provide guidelines for that process in order to guarantee:

- that students can openly, freely, and objectively select employment opportunities, making these choices based on their assessment of the best use of their abilities, their personal goals, and other pertinent facts;
- a recruitment process that is fair and equitable to students and employers alike;
- support for informed and responsible decision making by students.

Here's What You Can Reasonably Expect From Your Career Center...

1. Confidentiality.

Career staffs are expected to exercise sound judgment and fairness in maintaining the confidentiality of student information, regardless of the source, including written records, reports, and computer data bases. Disclosure of student information outside the college/university should only be made with your prior consent unless health and safety considerations necessitate the distribution of such information.

2. Freedom of choice.

You're entitled to be assisted by the career staff in developing a career plan and making career decisions without having staff members' biases or personal values imposed upon you.

3. Access to all services and events.

Career centers may charge students for registering or taking part in certain services or events. Such fees should be sufficiently nominal so as not to hinder you from participating.

4. Access to career information.

All students, regardless of personal or educational background, should be provided by career staffs with equal and full access to information on career opportunities and types of employing

organizations. Career staffs are also expected to inform you how and where to obtain information which may influence your decisions about an employing organization.

5. Testing information.

Career staffs should inform you of the availability of testing, the purpose of the tests, and the disclosure policies regarding test results.

...And From Employers

1. Confidentiality.

Employers are expected to maintain the confidentiality of student information, regardless of the source, including personal knowledge, written records/reports, and computer data bases. An employer shouldn't disclose information about you to another organization without your prior written consent, unless necessitated by health and/or safety considerations.

2. Accurate information.

Employers are expected to provide accurate information about their organizations and employment opportunities. This includes, but is not limited to, positions available, responsibilities, career advancement opportunities, and benefits.

3. Freedom from undue pressure.

Employers are expected to provide you with a reasonable amount of time to make a decision about accepting an employment offer.

They are also expected to provide you with a reasonable process for making your decision. An unreasonable process, for example, is one in which the student is told that the offer is good for a set amount of time; unbeknownst to the student, the same offer has been made to others--and the student who accepts first gets the job.

In addition, it is improper for employers to pressure you to revoke your acceptance of another job offer.

4. Timely communication.

Employers are expected to inform you of your status in the hiring process and communicate hiring decisions within the agreed-upon time frame.

5. Fair treatment.

If an employer is required by changing conditions to revoke a job offer that you've accepted, you're entitled to a fair and equitable course of action. That can include, but is not limited to, financial assistance and outplacement service.

6. Testing information.

Employers should inform you in advance of any testing, the purpose of the tests, and their policies regarding disclosure of test results.

7. Nondiscrimination.

Employers are expected to avoid discrimination in their recruitment activities and to follow equal employment opportunity and affirmative action principles.

What's Your Part in This?

1. Provide accurate information about your academic work and records, including courses taken, grades, positions held, and duties performed.

You can, however, refuse to provide an employer with specific information about any job offers you may have received from other employers. You do not have to name the organizations that have made you offers, nor do you have to provide specific information about what salaries you've discussed with those organizations. Instead, you can give broad responses to such questions, naming types of employers--*"I've interviewed with employers in the retail industry"*-- and offering salary ranges rather than specific dollar amounts--*"The salary offers I've received have been in the \$25,000 to \$30,000 range."* Incidentally, it's in your best interest to research salaries and to let employers know that you have done so.

2. Be honest.

Conduct your job search with honesty and integrity. Do not lie or stretch the truth on your resume, applications, or during any part of the interview process.

3. Interview genuinely.

Interview only with employers you're sincerely interested in working for and whose eligibility requirements you meet. "Practice" interviewing is misleading to employers—wasting both their time and money—and prevents sincerely interested candidates from using those interview slots.

4. Adhere to schedules.

Appear for all interviews, on campus and elsewhere, unless unforeseeable events prevent you from doing so. And, if you can't make the interview because of an unforeseeable event, notify your career center or the employer at the earliest possible moment.

5. Don't keep employers hanging.

Communicate your acceptance or refusal of a job offer to employers as promptly as possible, so they can notify other candidates that they are still being considered or that the position is filled.

6. Accept a job offer in good faith.

When you accept an offer, you should have every intention of honoring that commitment. Accepting an offer only as a precautionary measure is misleading to the employer and may restrict opportunities for others who are genuinely interested in that employer.

7. Withdraw from recruiting when your job search is completed.

If you accept an offer or decide that full-time graduate or professional studies are for you, notify your career center and withdraw from the on-campus recruiting process immediately. And, let employers that are actively considering you for a job know that you are now out of the running.

By informing everyone that you've got a job or are headed to graduate school, you not only get the chance to brag but also to help your friends who are trying to get on interview schedules or who are being considered for positions.

8. Claim fair reimbursement.

If an employer has agreed to reimburse you for expenses you incur in its recruitment process, your request should be only for reasonable and legitimate expenses.

9. Obtain the career information you need to make an informed choice about your future.

It's up to you to acquire the information about career opportunities, organizations, and any other information that might influence your decisions about an employing organization.

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