

Career Planning Center



Accepting & Declining Job Offers

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I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Post-graduate Employment.

Ideally, when an employer extends an offer for *post-graduation* employment, the offer will include a written document detailing salary and benefits. Most written offers are sent as PDF email attachments. Many employers, particularly smaller law firms, may be less formal in extending offers and provide only a verbal offer of employment. It is appropriate for you to request that the employer provide a written offer. If you feel uncomfortable making this request, you should at minimum email the employer a statement of your understanding of the offer and the terms to which you are agreeing.

B. Law Clerk/Summer Associate/Intern Position.

It is most common that employers will *not* include a written offer for *law clerk/summer associate/intern* positions. The exceptions are often larger law firms and corporations with written offers most commonly being sent via email. When accepting a law clerk position, it is equally prudent to confirm in an email or other written communication your understanding of the terms of the position.

II. TIMING.

A. Consider the Offer.

An offer of employment for a post-graduate position requires you to make a very important decision. Decisions are not nearly as weighty when accepting a law clerk or temporary position. When given an offer for an attorney position, avoid the temptation to accept a job offer on the spot. Instead, take time to review your options. Weigh your choices carefully and evaluate each opportunity and how it fits with your career goals. It is important you consider your options and that you have your questions answered before committing to a part-time or full-time job. If you are given an offer and you know it is the position you want, and you feel you are well informed regarding salary, benefits, work expectations and responsibilities, you can accept immediately. If you are not prepared to make a decision when the offer is extended, you should express enthusiasm for the position and the employer and then inquire as to the deadline for accepting or declining the offer. *Always* acknowledge receipt of an offer within 24 hours of it being received or extended.

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B. Requesting Additional Time.

You have the option of requesting additional time to consider an offer, although understand that employers are not obligated to grant such requests. In addition, some employers will express disappointment when you ask to have additional time. Small law firms, for example, often state a strong preference for students making decisions within a few days.

If/when you request additional time to consider an offer, do not seek career counsel from the offering employer. While it is appropriate to inform the employer that you are considering other options and would prefer two weeks to do so, it is not appropriate to explain the timelines of other employers, why you really want to wait to hear from other employers, etc. Employers do not care about your job search; they care about hiring the best candidate. And the “best candidate” is in part the individual who is really excited about the opportunity, not the individual who needs three weeks to see where the chips fall with other firms.

If you are active in a job search and have future interviews scheduled and/or are waiting to hear from employers with whom you have already interviewed, you may find yourself in a quandary of needing to accept or decline an offer before you know all your options. In this instance, we strongly encourage you to meet with a member of the CPC’s professional staff. They will walk you through options and etiquette. We do not recommend relying on guidance from family, friends or individuals outside the legal community.

C. Marquette Law School’s Guidelines for the Timing of Offers and Decisions.

The members of the National Association for Law Placement (NALP) – law schools and legal employers – have developed [Principals for Fair and Ethical Recruitment Process](#) that provide “suggested best practices designed to ensure the highest standards of professionalism, fairness, transparency, and non-discrimination.” These principals guide law school recruiting policies – including those of Marquette Law School – that pertain to employers seeking to recruit law students. [Marquette Law School’s Recruiting Policies for Employers](#), which are set forth in *Appendix B* of this guide, are designed to create an environment in which students have sufficient time to make informed career decisions and employers can rely on receiving responses within a reasonable time. We encourage you to review and familiarize yourself with these standards. Note, however, that while many legal employers abide by these policies, particularly large law firms, many do not.

III. ACCEPTING A JOB OFFER.

A. Call or Write?

While you certainly can accept an offer by telephone or in-person, *an acceptance should always be confirmed in writing*. It is common for employers to communicate written offers through email, but some still mail hard copies. It is best to respond in kind with your written acceptance.

B. The Acceptance Communication.

Even though you secured the job, it is still important that you impress the employer as to reaffirm that they made the right choice. The acceptance letter or email communication should be brief, consisting of three short paragraphs. See *Appendix A* for sample acceptance letters.

First Paragraph. The first paragraph should contain the formal acceptance of the job offer.

Second Paragraph. Confirm any employment details such as salary, where you will be working, start date, housing matters, etc.

Third Paragraph. Reiterate your enthusiasm for the job and that you look forward to working with the employer.

C. Do NOT Rescind.

It is *not* appropriate to accept an offer and to then continue with your job search. Once you have accepted a job offer, you should withdraw from all interviews and inform other employers for which you remain a candidate that you no longer wish to be considered for the position. Professional circles are small and memories long. It is unprofessional and unethical to accept a job offer with the intent of continuing an active job search and rescinding your acceptance should you receive a different offer.

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IV. DECLINING A JOB OFFER

A. Call or Write?

As with acceptances, it is appropriate and professional to decline an offer by telephone with formal follow up in writing if circumstances suggest a written follow-up is necessary.

B. Tips for Declining a Job Offer.

When declining an offer, keep the following in mind:

- Avoid saying anything negative about the employer, even if you had a negative experience interviewing.
- If you choose to decline an offer because another offer is a better fit for your interests, strengths and goals, it is fine to state this, though it's unnecessary. *Do not, however, provide details about why the declined offer is not the best fit. Indeed, try to avoid providing any specifics at all.* Doing so simply gives the employer a chance to counter your rationale and, in some cases, even criticize your decision.
- You need not state which offer you accepted, though you may do so if you wish.
- Be professional and courteous.

C. The Decline Communication.

Only two or three brief paragraphs are necessary for the purposes of a decline letter/email. Sample decline letters are provided in *Appendix A*. It is rare to mail a hard copy letter declining a job. Most common is a phone conversation and/or email communication. When sending an email, it should be structured as follows:

First Paragraph. Thank the employer for the offer and the opportunity.

Second Paragraph (or part of first paragraph). State that you are declining the offer. Depending on the course of the conversation, you may tactfully and briefly explain in general terms why you are declining, but it's not necessary to do so. Your explanation should be no more than a simple statement that you accepted an offer that was a better fit or that your job search has gone in a different direction. If appropriate, consider reiterating your interest in the employer.

Third Paragraph. Express your appreciation for their interest in you.

APPENDIX A

Sample Communications

Sample Acceptance Email:

Dear Ms. Williams:

I am writing to confirm my acceptance of your offer of employment for summer 2020 per our telephone conversation on November 26. I am delighted to be joining Hill, Meagher & Trask.

As we discussed, I will work from May 18, 2020 through August 14, 2020 at a salary of \$2,650.00 per week. I will present myself at the reception desk on the 34th floor of your offices on May 18 at 8:30 a.m. I am in the process of securing housing in Atlanta and will apprise you of my new contact information as soon as it is available. Until then, please do not hesitate to contact me at 414.575.1278 or gina.peters@marquette.edu.

I am excited to work with you and the attorneys at HM&T. I am grateful for the offer, and I look forward to taking full advantage of the opportunities provided to me as a summer associate.

Sincerely,

Gina Peters

Sample Acceptance Letter:

October 14, 2019

Attorney Mark L. Jacobson
Gilbert & Jacobson, P.C.
455 E. Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 300
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Attorney Jacobson:

Thank you for your offer of employment as an associate at Gilbert & Jacobson in your commercial litigation department. I am very happy to accept your offer, and I look forward to commencing work upon graduation from Marquette University Law School.

In your offer letter dated October 7, you indicated that I will be receiving a salary of \$115,000 per year, and I will initially report to Attorney Clara Lynch. As your offer stated, I will begin work on June 8, 2020. In the meantime, please let me know if I can provide you with any further information.

Again, thank you for offering me this exciting opportunity. I look forward to working at G&J.

Sincerely,

/s/ Aaron A. Downing

Aaron A. Downing

Sample Decline Email:

Dear Mr. Hertzelt:

Thank you very much for your telephone call and email offering me the position of Assistant General Counsel with JLM International's legal department. While I appreciate the challenging opportunity you offer, I received another offer which I believe more closely matches my current career goals and interests. Therefore, although the decision was a difficult one, I must decline your offer.

I greatly appreciate all the hospitality extended to me by your office, and I wish you well in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth McGrath

Sample Decline Letter:

October 30, 2019

Ms. Julia P. Reynolds, Hiring Partner
Billings, Taft, Golden & Harkes, S.C.
400 Miller Plaza, 40th Floor
850 Water Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Ms. Reynolds:

Thank you very much for considering me for Billings, Taft, Golden & Harkes' 2020 Summer Associate Program and for your recent offer. I appreciate the time you and the other attorneys at BTGH took to interview me and discuss the firm.

After much consideration, I have decided to accept a position with another law firm, and, therefore must decline your generous offer. I was extremely impressed with BTGH and the attorneys I met throughout the interview process, and I will not hesitate to again apply for a position with the firm if appropriate based on my future circumstances.

I wish you and your firm success with your recruiting efforts, and I hope our paths cross again. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Best regards,



Charles R. Barry

APPENDIX B



RECRUITING POLICIES FOR EMPLOYERS

Marquette Law School's Career Planning Center (CPC) values its relationships with employers and is pleased to offer our facilities and resources to assist employers in meeting their recruiting needs. The CPC's recruiting policies are guided by the National Association for Law Placement's [Principles for a Fair and Ethical Recruitment Process](#). We encourage you to contact us if you have any questions about the below policies or recruiting at Marquette Law School generally.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Marquette Law School is committed to providing its students and graduates with the opportunity to obtain employment without discrimination or segregation based on any personal factor unrelated to qualifications or performance such as, without limitation, race or color, ethnic background, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, religion, creed, age, disability or perceived disability, pregnancy status, or veteran's status. The CPC restricts its services and resources, including the posting of jobs and participation in Marquette Law School's on-campus interview programs, to employers that agree to abide by this policy.

Recruiting and Timing Guidelines

Marquette Law School has adopted the following guidelines regarding 1) the timing of and response to offers for employment and 2) employer contact with first-year students.

GENERAL PROVISIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When scheduling interviews with students when classes are in session, employers are asked to inquire about and make all reasonable efforts to avoid class conflicts and otherwise not disrupt students' studies.• All offers for employment should remain open for at least 14 days from the date of the written offer, <i>excepting private sector employers with more than 40 attorneys</i> (see the guidelines below).• The below guidelines notwithstanding, we request that employers treat Marquette Law School students no less favorably than students from any other law school with respect to the amount of time students are given to respond to offers for employment.
FIRST-YEAR STUDENT RECRUITMENT	
Initial Application Date	We ask employers to not initiate formal one-on-one recruiting contact with first-year students, including applications, interviews or offers for employment, before November 15 , particularly if final employment decisions are not expected to be made before first-semester grades are available in January. In limited circumstances, government employers requiring extensive background checks may solicit and review applications prior to November 15.
Interview Dates	Employers should not conduct interviews of any first-year student between Thanksgiving and the end of fall semester examinations (December 19, 2019) unless the student has been offered alternative dates outside this window and the student has expressed a preference to interview during this period.

OFFERS TO SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS (Private Sector Employers with Over 40 Attorneys)	
2L Students Not Previously Employed by the Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers for summer employment should be made in writing and remain open for at least 21 days from the offer letter, OR until December 1, whichever comes first; <u>except</u> that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Offers made before the first day of the Marquette’s Fall OCI should remain open for at least 21 days from the first day of OCI. b) Offers made after December 1 should remain open for at least two (2) weeks from the date of the offer letter. • If requested by the employer in the offer letter, students should reaffirm their interest in the offer within the timeframe and/or by the date specified in the offer letter (if the offer has not already been accepted or declined).
2L Students Previously Employed by the Employer	Offers for summer employment should remain open for 21 days from the first day of Marquette’s Fall OCI.
OFFERS FOR FULL-TIME, POST-GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT (Private Sector Employers with Over 40 Attorneys)	
Students NOT Previously Employed by the Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers for post-graduate employment made to students on or before December 1 should remain open for 21 days from the date of the written offer. • Offers for post-graduate employment made to students after December 1 should remain open for 14 days from the date of the offer letter.
Students Previously Employed by the Employer	Offers for post-graduate employment should remain open for 21 days from the date of the offer letter.