

Recruiting Activity Expectations for Students

Building a career starts with building professional habits. Whether you are attending a career fair, engaging in other recruiting events, or interviewing, your actions help shape your professional reputation.

The expectations outlined below apply to all UW–Madison students as they engage in recruitment activities, except for those enrolled in the [School of Medicine & Public Health](#), the [School of Veterinary Medicine](#), the [Law School](#), and non-pooled tuition programs. For more information about their specific expectations for students, please contact those offices directly. Following these expectations supports your own success and helps our campus sustain strong employer partnerships that benefit all Badgers. UW-Madison also holds employers accountable to ethical recruiting practices, which are outlined in our [Employer Policies and Guidelines](#). Many recruiting activities take place via UW-Madison's campus-wide career platform, Handshake. We recommend reviewing the [available resources and the institution's disclaimer](#).

Your [career services office](#) is here to support you throughout this process. If you have questions or run into a challenging situation, we *strongly* encourage you to contact your career services office and/or to make an appointment with a career advisor.

Provide accurate and truthful information.

Be honest and accurate in everything you share during the job search process—on your resume, cover letter, Handshake profile, LinkedIn, applications, and interviews. Exaggerating or falsifying information (like inflating your GPA or overstating a project outcome) can lead to losing an offer and can damage both your reputation and UW–Madison's credibility with employers.

Be intentional about interviews.

As you explore career opportunities, be thoughtful about which interviews you choose to pursue. Interviews can help you learn more about a role, organization, and work environment, while helping you determine if the position and organization are a good fit. Before moving forward, consider whether the opportunity aligns with your interests, goals, and preferences. If you are unsure, connect with your [career services office](#) to talk through the opportunity and your options.

If you are only accepting an interview opportunity for practice, we instead recommend using UW-Madison resources like [Big Interview](#) or completing a mock interview with a career advisor or coach. These can help you build confidence and strengthen your skills without taking a real interview spot from another student.

Show up for interviews and recruiting events you commit to.

Following through on commitments is an important part of professional etiquette and helps foster positive relationships with employers. If you can no longer participate in a recruiting event or interview, let the employer know as soon as possible with a brief, respectful explanation. If circumstances change unexpectedly, communicate promptly and contact your [career services office](#) for assistance if needed.

Treat employment offers carefully.

The availability and timing of opportunities and employment offers can vary significantly by organization and industry. This should be considered in your search strategy. Accepting an offer is a commitment.

Backing out later (renegeing) can harm your reputation and UW–Madison’s relationships with employers. For [international students](#), renegeing on an offer may have other implications for your current and future visa eligibility.

Additionally, before accepting a position, make sure you have the offer in writing and review the full package, including responsibilities, pay, benefits, and any agreements. If you have questions about reviewing or evaluating a job offer, connect with your [career services office](#) prior to accepting.

Communicate your needs when managing multiple offers.

We encourage employers to [set reasonable deadlines for job offers](#) because we understand it is in your best interest to have ample time to make an informed decision. If you receive an offer but need more time to decide, ask for an extension *before* the deadline and reaffirm your interest. It’s okay to be considering multiple opportunities—just be clear and timely in your communication.

If you are waiting on other employers, let them know you have an offer and ask about their timeline so you can make an informed decision. Clear communication helps you choose what’s best for you and builds trust with employers.

Accept offers and exit the recruiting process thoughtfully.

Accept your offer in writing or by following the specified process outlined by the employer (e.g., accepting the role in an online portal) and wait for confirmation that your acceptance was received before withdrawing from other opportunities. This helps ensure everything is finalized and confirms that the employer can end their search for the position.

Once you have accepted an offer, withdraw from all other opportunities. Let employers know as soon as possible (whether you have interviewed or have interviews scheduled) that you are no longer pursuing employment opportunities and thank them for their time. Accepting an offer means you should stop interviewing and applying for other jobs. Clear communication helps employers move forward with other candidates and shows respect.

Decline offers respectfully.

Deciding not to accept a job offer is a normal part of the career decision-making process. If you choose to decline an offer, communicate with the recruiter promptly and professionally and follow up with a brief thank-you.

A respectful response helps maintain positive relationships with employers, supports your professional reputation, and allows employers to continue the hiring process. This email template can be a helpful starting place for declining a job offer.

When declining an offer:

- Respond as soon as you have made your decision.
- Thank the employer for the opportunity.
- Clearly communicate that you are declining the offer.
- Keep any explanation brief. You are not obligated to share detailed information about your decision.
- Maintain a professional and respectful tone.

Avoid backing out (reneging) after accepting an offer. Doing so can harm your reputation, UW–Madison's reputation, and future opportunities for other students. While reneging is never an ideal first choice, we understand that unique situations may arise—we strongly encourage you to reach out to [your career services office](#) for guidance when navigating these circumstances.

Report accepted jobs and completed workplace experiences.

The information you report is used and shared in the aggregate (never as individual responses) to help current and future students learn about career opportunities and enables UW-Madison to assess and improve how we prepare students for career success.

Undergraduate Students

Report your accepted (post-graduation) job by completing the [First Destination Survey](#). Report completed internships, co-ops, student teaching, clinical, and other relevant experiences by filling out the [Workplace Experience Survey](#).

Graduate Students

Graduate Students in research-based Master's and PhD programs should report accepted (post-graduation) jobs by completing the Master's Exit Survey or Doctoral Exit Survey. Report completed internships, co-ops, student teaching, clinical, and other relevant experiences to your program as required by your program.

Consequences for Violations

When expectations are not met, your [career services office](#) will work with you to address concerns and identify next steps. This may include a conversation with a Career Services team member and, when appropriate, adjustments to access to Career Services resources and events.

- **Warnings:** Minor infractions may result in a written warning or required meeting with a career advisor to notify the student of the policy violation and the need for corrective action.
- **Handshake Account Suspension and/or Loss of Access to Recruiting Events:** More serious violations, including reneging on accepted employment offers, may lead to temporary suspension of account privileges or loss of access to recruiting events. During this time, the issue will be reviewed and discussed with the student to determine next steps for regaining access.
- **Handshake Account Termination:** Severe or repeated violations may result in the permanent termination of a student's Handshake account. This decision will be made at the discretion of the Office of Academic & Career Success in partnership with the school/college career services office.
- **Legal Action and/or Reporting Nonacademic Misconduct:** Violations that involve illegal activities may be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities and the [Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards](#).

Declining Offers Template

Email template for declining a job offer

Subject: Job Offer Decision

Dear [Hiring Manager Name],

Thank you for offering me the position of [Job Title] with [Organization/Employer Name]. I appreciate the opportunity to learn more about your organization and team.

After careful consideration, I have decided to decline the offer.

I am grateful for your time and consideration and wish you success in filling the role.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]