

INTRODUCTION

The University of Michigan Law School has a long and illustrious tradition of scholarship and service in international law. Each year the Law School sends students to non-profits and government organizations all over the world where they work on everything from human rights policy to environmental regulations to war crimes prosecution.

What are the possible jobs in international law in the public interest?

Practicing in international law in the public interest can mean many different things. You could use your skills to draft legislation, negotiate the release of certain medications with health ministries, or organize a workers' rights campaign. You could work on housing issues, economic development, women's issues, or trade issue.

Generally, *public international law* governs relationships between states and governments. Jobs in this area would include the work of intergovernmental organizations, like the United Nations, the World Health Organization, or the World Bank; and the work of government agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Justice and Department of State. These jobs often entail representing that agency or government in its relations with other agencies or governments. Consider applying for jobs at the U.S. government, even if they are based in Washington. Government agencies like the Department of Justice, Department of Commerce, U.S. Trade and Development Agency, Department of State, and USAID all have international law summer internships that provide great training for careers in international law. See the legislative branch for congressional committees and subcommittees that focus on internationally-related issues such as homeland security, trade and foreign relations. Also check out, Chapter 5 of Harvard Law School's *Serving the Public: a Job Search Guide, Vol. II International* and the NALP's [Finding and Funding International Public Service Opportunities](#) for additional opportunities within the U.S. government.

Private international law governs relationships between states and private parties. It may involve domestic or international law, and may include human rights violations, immigration claims, environmental claims, labor rights claims, or prosecuting war criminals. Work on such issues also takes place in international agencies and governments, but also in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (both local and international) and international tribunals.

You might also consider a job with a local legal organization in another country that works entirely within that country's system of domestic law, such as a local legal aid clinic or women's rights organization. While they will not generally include work in the

field of international law, these organizations can be great for building experience in a certain geographical region and for learning about another country's legal system.

Finally, some private law firms also get involved in areas of public international law, such as conflict resolution or economic development. Keep in mind that just because a law firm has offices abroad does not mean they practice international law. The firm may represent clients under the laws of the host country which is not international law. See the Office of Career Services for more information on law firms with an international law practice.

How do I find a job?

Students will tell you that the most useful way to find a job internationally is to research and network. To help with your job search, we have compiled a list of printed [resources and organizations](#). It is not an exhaustive list, but a place for you to begin your own research into this field. OPS has also compiled a list of [international internships, fellowships](#), and [general job posting sites](#) for specific NGOs, government agencies and job boards. These are just some of the many opportunities and resources that you can take advantage of in pursuing your public service interest area. Another resource is the [international and comparative law](#) web page of the [law school's curriculum interest areas](#) web site. This page lists all courses available as well as faculty members involved in international law. Use these resources as well as [currents students](#) and alumni as the beginning of your networking effort.

Are there special international programs targeted towards Michigan students?

Yes. In addition to the semester long externship that allows students to work in organizations in South Africa, we have several [fellowships and internships programs](#) that are specifically open to Michigan students. You can also create your own externship. See the [Office of Academic Services](#) for rules regarding externships.

Is there anything special I should know before applying for international jobs?

Make sure your resume and cover letter clarifies any terms or abbreviations that might not be clear to lawyers in other countries. Explain terms like "clinic," and "internship" more thoroughly than you would otherwise. Also, because many countries teach law at the undergraduate level, clarify in your cover letter that you are in a graduate law program. Don't send anything out without first looking at "Tips for Preparing a Resume" found in NALP's [Finding and Funding International Public Service Opportunities](#).

Apply in the fall (except if you are a 1L – 1Ls cannot apply until after December 1) but remember that NGOs outside of this country may work on different timetables, so you might not hear anything until late spring. Government agencies tend to set application deadlines so you should research your options early enough to meet the deadlines. One note regarding applying to NGOs: Many NGOs email service is unreliable. Follow up on all email correspondence with a phone call or letter.

For more questions and answers on applying for international jobs, see Chapter 1 of *Serving the Public: A Job Search Guide, Volume II—International*, 6th ed. (published by Harvard Law School). It is available for check-out in the Career Services library (210 HH) and provides invaluable information on a broad range of questions.

What happens when I get the job?

Be prepared to ask the organization a series of questions such as: what projects you will be working on, what textbooks you should bring for research, whether there will be internet access, whether you will need a laptop, and what travel you will be undertaking, if any. Since your goal is to do legal work during your summer, make sure your summer employer has specific legal projects lined up for you ahead of time. Offer to do some research on the project before you start your summer job as a way of ensuring that your supervisor has planned your work so you aren't left filing or answering correspondence.

Are there any associations or organizations that I can join that will help me as I pursue a career in international law?

The American Society of International Law (www.asil.org) has a range of sections serving different areas of international law.

The American Bar Association has listservs and informational forums, most of which are located in the Section on International Law.

- ABA Section on International Law is broken down into a series of committees and task forces many of which have listservs for their members. They also have a special outreach to law students and new lawyers (see the left navigation bar of the Section's home page). If you click on "Law students and new lawyers", you will see a link labeled "international internship program" on the right side. If you click that it will take you to a job posting board.
<http://www.abanet.org/intlaw/committees/roster/newroster.html>
- ABA Section on International Law's International Human Rights Committee has resources, including a listserv to which you can subscribe.
<http://www.abanet.org/abanet/common/email/listserv/listcommands.cfm?parm=subscribe&listgroup=internationallaw>
- ABA Section on International Law's International Environmental Law Committee has a "links of interest" page
<http://www.abanet.org/environ/committees/intenviron/links.html>

The Foreign Policy Association has a range of electronic newsletters to which you can subscribe. The titles include Foreign Policy Alert, Global Jobs and Global Views
<http://www.fpa.org/feedback2473/feedback.htm>

What if I am looking to intern or do a clerkship with an international court?

The Clerkship Advisor, Robin Kaplan, keeps a list of all of the clerkships that our alumni have done since 1993. You can access this list on the Office of Career Services web pages at <http://www.law.umich.edu/currentstudents/careerservices/pdf/Appendixa.pdf> . The list contains both domestic and international post-graduate clerkships so you will have to scroll down to find the non-domestic clerkships. Another great research is Yale's "[Opportunities with International Tribunals and Foreign Courts.](#)"

Below is a sample of possible International Clerkships.

Post Graduate Clerkships:

International Court of Justice
Supreme Court of Israel
Constitutional Court of South Africa
Inter-American Court of Human Rights

Summer/Semester Clerkships:

Dean Acheson Legal State Program at the European Court of Justice
Supreme Court of South Africa
International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia