



CALLBACK INTERVIEW GUIDE



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WHAT IS A CALLBACK INTERVIEW?

A callback interview is the second level of interviewing that takes place at the firm's office after an initial OCI interview. Generally, firms do not make decisions on offers of employment until after a candidate has completed a callback interview. A callback interview generally includes interviews with numerous lawyers conducted in a manner similar to an OCI interview, and often includes lunch or dinner with many attorneys from the firm.

THE PURPOSE OF A CALLBACK INTERVIEW

A firm has two main goals for a callback interview: (1) To see whether a candidate is a good fit for the firm and (2) to sell the firm to the candidate. Firms will determine whether a candidate is a good fit by trying to get to know the person during their time at the office. The interviewers' goal is to feel like they really know who the candidate is by the end of the day. Interviewers will sell the firm to a candidate by describing the firm's operation, atmosphere and work through personal experiences they have had with the firm.

At the same time, a callback interview is an opportunity for a candidate to see what life is like for a lawyer at the firm. This may be the only chance for a candidate to get to know the firm before receiving an offer of employment.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET

This booklet describes what a candidate can expect during a callback interview. While this booklet is comprehensive, it may not answer all of your questions. You are encouraged to meet with a Career Development Office advisor to discuss any questions you may have about your callback interviews.

GOOD LUCK!

I. GETTING THE CALLBACK INTERVIEW

When will I hear back from a firm after my initial OCI interview?

Most firms will contact you shortly after your OCI interview to schedule a callback. However, some will contact you a few weeks later. Do not get anxious if you have not heard back from a firm. Check with other students who interviewed with that firm. It could be that the firm has not yet made any decisions on whom to invite back. It is best to not contact the firm unless you have received an offer from another firm and the deadline to accept is approaching. Be prepared to state who the firm is when you call.

Callback invitations may come by phone, letter or email. Make sure your contact information is correct on your resume. Also, be sure to record a professional sounding message on your voicemail or answering machine. Finally, check your email often so that you do not miss any invitations.

How do I respond to an invitation for a callback interview?

Your callback invitation should provide you with the name and contact information for the person you must contact to respond to your invitation. You should respond as soon as possible, even if you will not be able to schedule your callback for a few weeks. It is considered professional courtesy to respond within one day. You must respond to decline a callback with the same professional courtesy. Sometimes, students receive callback invitations at the conclusion of their OCI interview. In such cases, you should respond enthusiastically but you do not need to commit to the callback at that time, unless you are certain you want to accept.

II. SCHEDULING THE CALLBACK INTERVIEW

Who do I contact to schedule my callback interview?

Your callback invitation should tell you whom to contact to schedule the callback. Most likely, the person you will speak with is the recruitment coordinator. The recruitment coordinator is usually a member of the firm's staff who is not an attorney but whose job is devoted entirely to hiring laterals and running the summer associate program. In some cases, the recruiting coordinator will be an attorney. It is imperative that you treat the recruiting coordinator with the same respect that you give to the attorneys you interview with. Even though this individual may not be an attorney, they will undoubtedly be asked to provide their opinion of you and will be a factor in the hiring decision.

How long do callback interviews last?

The length of a callback interview can vary. Some callback interviews last 2-3 hours, others can last all day. You should ask the recruitment coordinator or the attorney responsible for scheduling your callback for information on how long the callback interview should last, how many attorneys you are meeting with, and the names of the attorneys you are meeting with. It is possible that the recruitment coordinator will not know who you will be meeting with and will ask you to call a few days before the callback to get the information.

My callback will take place out of town. What do I do about travel expenses?

Many, but not all, firms reimburse candidates for travel expenses incurred from a callback interview. Generally, a firm will pay for all *reasonable* travel expenses:

- Single hotel room
- Coach airfare
- Cab fare to and from the airport
- Cab fare to and from the hotel and firm
- A meal or two (depending on your arrival)

Reasonable travel expenses do not include any superfluous expenses such as first class airfare, room service or pay per view movies.

You should speak to the recruitment coordinator about the firm's policy on travel expenses. A good way to raise the subject is to ask the recruitment coordinator whether you should make your own travel arrangements. At that time, the coordinator should explain the policy to you. In some cases, a firm will request receipts from expenses incurred or ask you to fill out a NALP reimbursement form. A copy of the NALP reimbursement form is available in the back of this booklet. Keep in mind that if a firm requests a hotel receipt, they will see all expenses incurred, even if you intended to pay for some things out of pocket. Incurring expenses such as room service or pay per view movies can reflect poorly on you and can be taken into consideration by a firm when making a decision. If you have any doubt about an expense, check with the recruitment coordinator before incurring the expense.

Keep in mind that some firms will only reimburse expenses after they have made an offer of employment to that individual. Other firms will not pay for travel expenses at all.

What do I do if I have several callback invitations in a particular city?

If you are interviewing with more than one firm on the trip, be sure to ask the coordinator about the firm's procedure for sharing expenses. Do not worry about letting the firm know that you are interviewing with other firms, firms know that this may be the case. They will appreciate your honesty and interest in saving them money.

III. PREPARING FOR THE CALLBACK INTERVIEW

Research, research, research

It is imperative that you prepare for your callback interview by doing a lot of research. You should research the firm, its summer associate program, the city the firm is located in and the individual attorneys you are meeting with.

Learn about the firm

You should do plenty of research on the firm. While a firm's web site has a lot of information about the firm, you do not want to recite the firm's web site back to the interviewers. Some additional sources of information:

- A news search of the firm on Westlaw or LEXIS
- Area bar journals, many of which are online
- Legal web sites like Find Law (careers.findlaw.com)
- A web search through a search engine like Google (www.google.com)

Learn about the summer associate program

Many firms provide extensive information about their summer associate programs on their website. You should familiarize yourself with the information provided to avoid asking questions that could be answered through basic research. Also, find out if any current Miami Law 3Ls were summer associates at the firm and ask them for information about the summer associate program.

Learn about the city/state/region you are interviewing in

It is possible that you will be asked why you are interested in the city you are interviewing in. Be prepared to discuss your interest in the city as well as the state and region. You want the interviewer to be convinced that you intend to move to the city should you receive an offer.

Learn about the attorneys you will be meeting with

You should ask the recruitment coordinator for the names of the attorneys you will be meeting with. The recruitment coordinator may not have this information available for you until a few days before your callback. If you do get the names of the attorneys in time, you should learn more about them. Martindale-Hubbell (www.martindale.com) provides short biographies of attorneys. In addition, the firm's web site should also provide biographical and professional information about the attorneys. You may find that the firm has scheduled interviews with attorneys that share some things in common with you (law school or college alma mater, work experience, etc.).

Prepare questions to ask during your callback interview

Be sure to prepare questions to ask during your interviews. It is acceptable to ask the same or similar questions of more than one attorney because you may get different answers. You can also tailor questions to a particular attorney and his practice area or experience.

Do not ask questions regarding billable hours, whether associates work on weekends, dress code, attrition rates or the like until you have an offer.

What should I bring with me?

Bring extra copies of your resume, transcript, writing sample and references – enough for everyone you are meeting and extras, in case other attorneys ask for your information, or are added to your schedule.

What do I wear?

Dress as you did for the OCI interview. In other words, dress professionally. Take care of the basic hygiene requirements prior to your interview. This is not the time to show the latest non-professional fashion trends. Men should wear suits or slacks with a jacket, dress shirt and tie. Have a clean shave and neat haircut. No shorts, jeans or sneakers. Women should wear suits (pants or skirts). Hair, nails and make-up should be neat and fresh. Avoid sleeveless tops (except under suit jacket), cleavage, glitter or excessive jewelry. No sundresses, shorts, or mini-skirts. No open-toe shoes.

Packing for an out of town callback

If you are flying to another part of the country, be sure to dress accordingly for the weather. Check www.weather.com for the latest forecast in the city you are visiting. Always bring extra shirts, shoes, socks, panty hose etc. just in case. Bring an overcoat and umbrella.

Review and update your online information

Review and update your social networking pages (i.e. Facebook and Twitter) and be aware of any information about you that is searchable on the web. In this day and age, it is not out of the question for employers to seek out a candidate's online presence via a Google search or a search of popular social networking sites. You should always use your discretion when dealing with online materials. Your online reputation is as important as your real life one so you should take steps to ensure that any online information about you will not derail your efforts to obtain a position. Google your own name and see if you are comfortable with the information available. Review your social networking pages and make sure that the details do not reflect poorly on you. You do not have to remove your online accounts. Instead, take advantage of the access restrictions available to you by making your pages private. You should be comfortable with a potential employer viewing any visible photos or text.

IV. THE CALLBACK INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

There is no set formula for a callback. You could meet with as few as two attorneys and as many as ten. Some attorneys will meet you in small groups, other individually. These interviews will be a lot like your OCI interviews and can last anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour.

What is lunch like?

Callback schedules generally include lunch, or some type of break. You can expect anything from lunch at a nice restaurant near the office, a catered lunch at the office, a coffee break, a walking tour of the area near the office, etc. Lunch generally lasts an hour to an hour and a half.

The purpose of the lunch/break is to provide the attorneys joining you an opportunity to get to know you. Please remember that lunch is still a formal part of the interview. You should prepare questions to ask attorneys while at lunch. Since lunch usually includes first and second year associates, you should ask questions about their experiences thus far. However, beware of young associates who tell you that you can ask them anything, even about salary and billable hours. Even though they appear open and intimate, do not take them on their offer and ask such questions. It is likely they will tell the hiring partner.

You will be eating with a number of people so be sure to include them in your conversation. When responding to a question, make eye contact with everyone at the table, not just the person who asked the question. Try to speak to everyone at the table. Remember to use proper etiquette while at the table.

What should I order?

Since lunch is part of the hiring process, even your meal order is important. Order from the middle of the price range and order something that is easy and not messy to eat. Do not order alcoholic beverage, even if others at the table do. Use your discretion in ordering appetizers and desserts, i.e. if everyone else orders or insists that you order.

V. AT THE CALLBACK INTERVIEW

Arrive at the firm approximately 15 minutes early and ask for the recruitment coordinator or the individual you were told to ask for.

What if I know I am going to be late?

Should some emergency arise (car accident, traffic problems), call ahead and tell the recruitment coordinator so your schedule can be arranged.

Greeting attorneys and staff

You should treat anyone you meet at the firm respectfully, whether the person is a partner or a staff member. Shake hands when introduced. Always make eye contact.

Pay attention

This is the perfect opportunity to observe the employer. You likely will be taken from one office to another for each interview. While walking through the office, try to notice the atmosphere of the firm. Do attorneys greet each other when they pass? Are attorneys' doors open or closed? Is there friendly interaction between the staff and attorneys? Do people seem pleasant or harried and tired?

Saying goodbye

Thank each interviewer at the conclusion of your interview. Ask for a business card so you have the proper spelling of their name as well as their contact information. The last part of a callback generally consists of a tour of the office and a final discussion with either the hiring attorney, recruiting coordinator or the attorney in charge of the summer associate program. You can take this opportunity to ask questions regarding the firm's hiring process (i.e. when the hiring committee meets) and when you can expect to hear back from the firm. At the end of the callback, thank the recruitment coordinator for coordinating the callback.

VI. AFTER THE CALLBACK INTERVIEW

Take notes

Immediately after the callback, write down notes on your impression of the firm and about the discussions you had with each attorney. These notes will be helpful when you prepare your thank you letters and will help you make a decision should you get an offer from the firm.

Thank you letters

Within 48 hours, prepare and send thank you notes to each interviewer you met and the recruitment coordinator. Do not send the same letter to each person. Tailor each thank you letter to the individual by referencing topics you discussed at your interview. If you decide to use email (which is preferable given the time crunch), you should still use a professional business format and tone.

Hearing back from the firm

Remember to write down when you were told you would hear back from the firm. If that time passes without any response from the firm, you may contact the recruitment coordinator to reiterate your interest in the firm and to ask if there is any additional information that you can provide them. If enough time has passed that you have received additional grades or accolades, offer to send that information to the firm. Do not ask point blank whether a decision has been made and do not continue to nag the recruitment coordinator. Keep in mind that firms often make a first round of offers and then, based on how many rejections they receive, make a second round of offers. Therefore, you may still receive an offer even if you do not hear from them soon after the callback.

VII. ACCEPTING AND REJECTING OFFERS

Receiving the offer

It is possible that you will receive an offer during your callback interview. You should respond enthusiastically but you do not need to accept on the spot. You also may receive a phone call telling you that you have an offer. A firm should still put your offer in writing and you can wait until you received the written offer before accepting.

How long do I have to decide whether to accept an offer?

NALP offers detailed standards for the timing of offers and decisions. These standards apply to NALP employers with more than 40 attorneys. Students should read offer letters very carefully and track all response deadlines, as well as reaffirmation dates, accordingly. The NALP standards are provided below. **Please note: regardless of these guidelines, you should notify an employer of your decision to accept as soon as you make it, even if it is in advance of the deadline you've been given. You should also notify the CDO upon acceptance of an employment offer.**

- Employers offering summer or full-time positions commencing after graduation to candidates not previously employed by them should leave those offers open for **at least 28* days** following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first. **Candidates should reaffirm these offers within 14 days from the date of the offer letter, if an employer requests such reaffirmation in its offer letter.** Offers made after December 15 should remain open for at least two weeks after the date of the offer letter.
- Employers offering summer or full-time positions commencing after graduation to candidates previously employed by them should leave those offers open until at least October 1 of the candidate's final year of law school, provided the offers are made prior to or on September 2. **Candidates should reaffirm these offers within 30 days from the date of the offer letter. Employers may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed within the 30 day period.** After September 2 of a candidate's final year of law school, employers offering full-time positions to commence following graduation to candidates previously employed by them should leave those offers open for **at least 28 days*** following the date of the offer letter.
- If an employer makes an offer to a candidate not previously employed by that employer before the beginning of the law school's on campus interview program, that offer should not expire until **at least 28 days*** following the first day of the law school's on campus interview program.
- Candidates actively pursuing positions with public interest or government organizations may ask an employer to extend the deadline to accept until as late as April 1. Candidates may hold open only one such offer in such circumstances and employers are encouraged to grant such requests.

* the 28 day offer period begins on the day following the date of the offer letter and ends on the close of business on the 28th day. For example, if an offer letter is dated September 2, day one of the 28 day window is September 3 and the offer will expire at the close of business on September 30. If September 30 is a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, the offer should be extended to the next business day.

For NALP employers with 40 or fewer attorneys who are offering candidates summer or full-time positions commencing after graduation, offers made on or before December 15 should remain open for at least three weeks following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first, and offers made after December 15 should remain open for at least two weeks.

These standards can be confusing to understand. If you have any questions about offers and the timing standards, please speak to your advisor.

How many offers can I hold at one time?

A student should not hold open more than **five (5) offers** of employment at any one time. For each offer received that places a student over the offer limit, the student should, within one week of receiving the excess offer, release an offer.

I have an offer I do not want. What do I do?

You should decline promptly offers that you are no longer seriously considering. If you wait to decline an offer, you may be preventing the employer from making an offer to another student. You should notify the employer as soon as you make the decision, even if it is in advance of the

deadline. It is preferable to decline by phone or email. You should also notify the CDO upon rejection of an employment offer.

Can I get assistance in drafting an acceptance or rejection letter to an offer?

Yes; CDO advisors are available to provide guidance. It is recommended that you view the CDO's *Sample Letters Accepting and Rejecting Offers* publication for assistance as well.

What if I still have questions about my callback offers?

For any additional questions that may not have been answered in this booklet, please stop by the Career Development Office and see an advisor.

VIII. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources provided by NALP are useful as you proceed through the callback interview process. You may obtain copies of these resources from the CDO Resource Room, your CDO advisor or the NALP website (www.nalp.org).

- The *NALP Open Letter to Law Students* callback interviews section details eight important points to remember during the callback interview process
- The *NALP Student Professionalism During the Interview Season: A Quick Guide to Your Ethical Responsibilities in the Offer and Decision Making Process* highlights the professionalism and courtesy expected of all law students during the callback interview process
- The *NALP Travel Expense Reimbursement Form* is often used by employers and students to accurately depict the reasonable expenses incurred callback interview trips.