

### **Avoiding Job Scams and Researching Employers**

**Be Aware! Learn about potential scams related to jobs and internships.** When you are applying to multiple jobs or internships, it may be challenging to keep track of them all. Most employers will email or call you on the phone, and identify themselves by their name and organization, in order to arrange an interview.

#### **Signs that a job is probably fraudulent:**

- The promise of a large salary for little work, especially those that suggest you will earn thousands of dollars of income per month with little or no experience required.
- Positions that ask you to give credit card or bank account numbers, or copies of personal documents.
- Jobs that ask you to send payment by wire service or courier.
- Positions in which you are offered a large payment or reward in exchange for allowing the use of your bank account - often for depositing checks or transferring money.
- While there are legitimate opportunities for individuals to work from home, be sure to research the hiring organization in advance of applying.
- If you receive a text message or phone call offering you an interview or a job, and the sender doesn't identify themselves. Review your applications and reach out through the original contact information provided, if it seems like a position you did apply to.

#### **What should I do if I think I have been scammed?**

- You should never provide information such as credit card numbers, social security number, or bank account numbers. Avoid sharing other personally identifying information prior to meeting with an organization in person and confirming the legitimacy of the opportunity.
- Never spend any of your own money on an employment opportunity unless you are certain that it is for a legitimate reason.
- If you doubt the legitimacy of an email or phone call, contact the CDI at 803/323-2141 or [careerdev@winthrop.edu](mailto:careerdev@winthrop.edu).
- If you believe you are the victim of fraud, contact Campus Police at 803/323-3333.
- If you suspect an email is a scam or phishing OR if you reply to an email but later suspect it was a scam, we recommend you contact the Help Desk at 803/323-2400 or [servicedesk@winthrop.edu](mailto:servicedesk@winthrop.edu).

#### **Additional information about avoiding job scams:**

- Federal Trade Commission information about Job Scams: <http://ftc.gov/jobscams>
- Indeed: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/job-scams>
- NerdWallet: <https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/finance/how-to-avoid-job-scams>

#### **Researching the legitimacy of an employer or employment opportunity:**

The Winthrop University Center for Career Development and Internships (CDI) does not endorse any employer and urges students to use good judgment in all interactions with employers. We advise students to participate in job interviews in public places or places of business only. The CDI is not responsible for safety, wages, working conditions or other aspects of off-campus employment.



Due to the volume of jobs received through Handshake, the CDI may be unable to research the integrity of each organization. **Handshake has a Trust and Safety team** that screens all new employers, in efforts to prevent fraudulent activity. The CDI suggests that job seekers request business references for unknown organizations before interviewing with them off campus. If you have concerns about a job posting or related correspondence you receive, contact the CDI at 803/323-2141 or [careerdev@winthrop.edu](mailto:careerdev@winthrop.edu).

#### **Why is it important to research each job or internship opportunity?**

- Find out if the job advertisement and the organization that offers it is legitimate.
- Find information to help you determine whether the organization or job is a good fit for you.
- Find data to help you write targeted resumes and cover letters.
- Find facts to help you answer interview questions such as: Why do you want to work for us?

#### **To Avoid Job Scams, Research the Job and Organization**

- **Visit the website:** If the organization doesn't have a website or the website domain doesn't seem to match the industry or reflect anything about the advertised job, there may be cause for concern. Note the professionalism of the web site. Is there specific contact information (i.e., names, emails, and phone numbers for actual people)? Are jobs and career information posted on the organization's site? Lack of pertinent information is a red flag.
- **Find organization profiles and news articles:** Ask a Reference Librarian at [Dacus Library](#) about how to conduct organization/company/agency research using databases such as Hoovers.com, Lexis Nexis, and many other available resources.
- **Use Personal Contacts, LinkedIn or Other Networking Sites:** Do you have any connections to help you learn more about an organization? If you belong to a professional association, they may be able to put you in touch with people who can advise you. Search LinkedIn by "People" and the Advanced Search Fields for "Company Name." Click the "Current Companies Only" checkbox to receive information on people currently listed as employed by this company.
- **Use Google:** Google is an excellent tool to search by the name of the organization to see what information you can find. You can also search by "<organization name> scam" to see if this organization has been reported as a scam.
- **Check with Consumer Services:** Two organizations to utilize are: the Better Business Bureau or the Federal Trade Commission to see if any complaints have been lodged against the company.
- **Investigate the Organization's References:** If you aren't sure whether an organization is legitimate, request a list of employees or contractors. Then contact the references to see how satisfied they are. If an organization isn't willing to share references (names, email addresses and phone numbers), this is a red flag.
- **Poor Communication Skills:** Be cautious when an employer cannot communicate accurately or effectively on their website, by email, over the telephone, etc. If communications are sloppy and unprofessional, it may not be legitimate.
- **Exercise Caution When Asked to Pay Any Fees:** Most legitimate employers will not charge to hire you. Don't send money for work-at-home directories, advice on getting hired, company information or for anything else related to the job. There are some well-known internship programs that do require payment to place you in internships, but before making a payment, investigate further or check with the CDI to make sure the organization is legitimate. Remember that Handshake and other databases can provide Winthrop students with free help in locating internships.



*Center for Career Development & Internships*

- **Review Payment Information:** When information about salary isn't listed on a job posting, try to find out if you will receive a salary, hourly wage, or be paid on commission. Research or inquire about the rate of pay, how often employees are paid and how.
- **Caveat Emptor (Let the Buyer Beware):** Read all information carefully. If the opportunity sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Just because a job posting appears in a legitimate publication or website, it doesn't mean that the job or organization is, necessarily, legitimate.

*Adapted with permission from: West Chester University of PA Twardowski Career Development Center*