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Job Document Preparation and the Interview

October 21, 2026



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Math/Psychology 201 • (410) 455-2216 • careers@umbc.edu

Before We Start: Please Sign In

Scan to sign in for attendance

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Introduction



- Career Peer at the UMBC Career Center
- Master's student here at UMBC, graduating May 2027
- I review résumés, cover letters, and LinkedIn profiles every week

THE POINT OF TODAY

You already have the material. This hour is about packaging it.

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this hour, you will be able to:

- Describe what employers are screening for, using the NACE career readiness framework
- Build a résumé that survives a scan, and know when a CV is the right document instead
- Write a cover letter that adds new information rather than repeating your résumé
- Structure interview answers with the STAR method and follow up with a thank-you letter that lands

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Understand Your Options

Resource: What can you do with your major?



WHAT CAN I DO WITH MY DEGREE IN...

MODERN LANGUAGES & LINGUISTICS

UMBC

Using this Major Sheet

- Large headings indicate industries and subheadings indicate employer types.
- Use the job titles listed below to research on platforms like Steppingblocks, FOCUS, and O*Net. Explore your options across different fields and industries. Note that some titles may have multiple names referring to similar positions.
- An asterisk (*) indicates the need for additional qualifications such as graduate education, certifications, or extensive experience. Additional research may be needed to understand these requirements.

For more resources see: **careers.umbc.edu/tools/majors**

Also check out related Major Sheets for: **MLL, MCS, ENGL, SOCY, ANTH, EDUC**

COMMUNICATIONS

Multilingual Services (Translation Bureaus, Phone Companies, Int'l Corp., Gov't)
- International Operator
- Customer Service Representative
- Translator
- Technical Translator
- Interpreter
- Software Translator

Publishing / Journalism (Newspapers, Publishing Houses, Radio/TV, Wire Services)
- Editor
- Reporter
- News Writer
- Foreign News Correspondent
- Sales Representative
- Technical Writer
- Researcher
- Travel Book Writer/Editor
- Promotions Assistant
- Circulation Personnel
- Critic
- Textbook Representative

Advertising / Marketing / Public Relations
- Marketing Research Analyst
- Advertising Salesperson
- Media Buyer/Assistant
- Public Relations Specialist
- Marketing Coordinator
- Special Events Coordinator
- Consumer Survey Supervisor
- Copywriter
- Jr. Account Executive

PUBLIC POLICY

Congress / State Legislature / President, Governor, Mayor's Office
- Congressional/Legislative Aide
- Legislative Research Assistant
- Congressional Committee Staff
- Legislative Correspondent
- Press Assistant
- Campaign Staffer/Aide

Policy Organizations (Issue-Oriented/Political Party/Public Interest/Nat'l Associations)
- Project Assistant
- Lobbyist Assistant
- Fund-Raiser/Development Associate
- Research Associate
- Membership Coordinator
- Event Coordinator
- Public Policy Analyst
- Legislative Advocate

LOCAL, STATE, & FEDERAL AGENCIES

Dept of: Transportation, Economic Development, Housing, Commerce, etc.
- Public Affairs Officer
- Information Officer
- Tourism Development Officer
- Bicultural Program Specialist
- Contract Administrator
- Foreign Markets Analyst
- Port Marketing Rep.
- Research Assistant
- International Trade Expert
- World Trade Center Staff

INTELLIGENCE / CORRECTIONS
- CIA/FBI/DIA Special Agent
- Government Intelligence Analyst
- Probation/Parole Officer
- Police Officer
- Immigration Agent
- Customs Offic

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Today's Roadmap

1. What Employers Actually Want
2. The Résumé (and the CV)
3. Cover Letters & Correspondence
4. Online Presence
5. The Interview & The Thank-You

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PART ONE

What Employers Actually Want

Take a Guess…

On average, how long does a recruiter spend on your résumé the first time?

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The NACE Career Readiness Competencies

There are **eight career readiness competencies**, each of which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways.



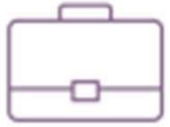
Career & Self-Development



Leadership



Communication



Professionalism



Critical Thinking



Teamwork



Equity & Inclusion



Technology

Who is NACE?

The National Association of Colleges and Employers. They survey the employers who hire you, every single year.

Why it matters

These eight competencies are the vocabulary employers already use internally. When your résumé and interview answers speak in this language, you are easier to say yes to.

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Your Degree Already Builds These

Communication
You have spent four years on how meaning actually travels between people

Critical Thinking
Analyzing a corpus, testing a hypothesis about language use, defending a claim with data

Equity & Inclusion
Sociolinguistics is literally the study of language, power, and access

Technology
Praat, ELAN, R, corpus tools, transcription and annotation software

Career & Self-Development
Every language you studied, every methods course you took on your own initiative

The gap is never the experience. It is the translation.

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Activity: Name That Competency

1. Transcribed 40 hours of interview audio for a faculty research project, then built the coding scheme the team used
2. Tutored adult ESL learners weekly and redesigned the pronunciation unit when the old one wasn't working
3. Presented your capstone findings to a room of people who had never taken a linguistics course
4. Coordinated a student org's event calendar across three other clubs

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PART TWO

The Résumé (and the CV)

What Makes a Résumé Stand Out

WELL-STRUCTURED — clean, consistent, easy to skim in one pass

CORRECT — no typos, consistent tense, consistent formatting

TARGETED — mirrors the language of the posting you are answering

DETAILED — numbers, scope, and outcomes instead of job duties

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Résumé vs. CV: Which One Do You Need?

RÉSUMÉ

- 1 page (2 if the experience earns it)
- Rewritten for every position
- A marketing document: it argues you can do this job
- Industry, government, nonprofit, NGO, publishing, tech, localization

CURRICULUM VITAE

- No page limit — it grows across your whole career
- Largely stable; you add to it rather than rewrite it
- A record: it documents your scholarly output
- Grad school, research assistantships, fellowships, Fulbright, academic posts

Same raw material. Your résumé argues. Your CV documents.

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Résumé Sections

REQUIRED

- Name
- Contact info (no street address)
- Education
- Experience
- Skills

OPTIONAL — PICK WHAT HELPS

- Summary or Objective
- Relevant Coursework
- Research Experience
- Projects
- Languages
- Publications & Presentations
- Honors & Awards
- Campus Involvement / Leadership
- Volunteering
- Certifications



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Education Section

FORMAT

University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) Baltimore, MD
B.A. in (Degree Name), GPA: X.XX / 4.00 Expected: Month Year

EXAMPLE

University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) Baltimore, MD
B.A. in Modern Languages, Linguistics & Intercultural Communication
Concentration: Applied Linguistics | GPA: 3.74 / 4.00 Expected: May 2027

- Include GPA if it is 3.0 or above.
- List study abroad here, with the institution and term
- Relevant Coursework belongs here only if the courses genuinely match the posting

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Experience Section

Every entry needs four things: organization, location, your title, and dates with months.

UMBC Language Science Lab Baltimore, MD
Undergraduate Research Assistant Sep 2025 – Present

- Transcribed and annotated 40+ hours of sociolinguistic interview data in ELAN, producing the coded dataset for a study on regional dialect variation
- Built the inter-rater reliability protocol adopted by a four-person coding team, raising agreement from 78% to 94%
- Presented preliminary findings at URCAD to an audience of 60+ students and faculty outside the field

Split into separate sections when it helps you:

- RESEARCH EXPERIENCE — lab work, faculty projects, your capstone
- TEACHING & TUTORING EXPERIENCE — ESL, writing centre, language tables, TA work
- RELATED EXPERIENCE vs. ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE — lets you keep the retail job without it competing with the lab work

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All Experiences Count

- Jobs and internships, paid or unpaid
- Research assistantships and faculty projects
- Tutoring, teaching, writing centre, language tables
- Volunteering and service learning, where it was substantial
- Campus organizations, especially anything you ran
- Study abroad and immersion programs
- Independent projects, your capstone, conference posters

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…as long as it is relevant to this posting, or shows you in a light this employer cares about.

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The Bullet Point Formula

Before you write a bullet, answer these:

WHAT exactly did I do?

HOW did I do it — what tool, method, or approach?

WHO was I working with, or for? How many?

WHY did it matter to the organization?

RESULT — what changed because I did it?

Action Verb + Description + Impact

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Activity: Fix This Bullet

Both of these are real. Tell me what is missing, and how you would rewrite them.

BEFORE "Helped with a research project in the linguistics department."

AFTER "Coded **120 recorded interviews** for discourse markers using ELAN, **cutting the team's analysis time by roughly a third**."

BEFORE "Tutored ESL students."

AFTER "Tutored **12 adult ESL learners** weekly in pronunciation and conversational fluency; **9 advanced to the next proficiency level within one term**."

If you cannot count it, describe the scope. "Across three departments" works when a number doesn't.

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The Skills Section, For Linguists

- **Languages:** Spanish (Fluent), Mandarin (Intermediate), ASL (Basic) — use honest, consistent labels
- **Analysis Tools:** Praat, ELAN, ANVIL, corpus tools (AntConc, Sketch Engine)
- **Technical:** R, Python, SPSS, Excel, SQL — list only what you could be tested on
- **Research Methods:** Discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, transcription (IPA), survey design, IRB protocols
- **Professional:** Localization workflows, CAT tools, technical writing, curriculum design

Never list a language or tool you could not demonstrate in the interview.

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Formatting Rules That Actually Matter

THE BASICS

- One page. Font 10.5–12pt, margins 0.5″–1″
- No more than two fonts
- Bold, italics, and caps used sparingly and consistently
- Tabs and bullets aligned — check this at 200% zoom
- Save and send as PDF unless they ask for .docx

SURVIVING THE ATS

- Skip tables, columns, text boxes, and graphics — parsers choke on them
- Use standard section headers the system recognises
- Mirror exact keywords from the posting, in your own true sentences
- Avoid headers/footers for contact info; some parsers never read them
- Those generic online templates? They are the main culprit

AND THE ONE THAT ENDS APPLICATIONS

Did you check for typos? Do not rely on spell check.

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PART THREE

Cover Letters & Correspondence

What a Cover Letter Does That a Résumé Can't

PAGES 43-45

- Tells your story — why this field, why this organization, why now
- Expands on the two or three things from your résumé that matter most here
- Shows you researched them, not just that you can operate an apply button
- Addresses a concern head-on: a career pivot, a gap, a lower GPA
- Separates you from candidates with nearly identical résumés

Write it with the employer's interests in mind, not your own.

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Anatomy of a Cover Letter

ONE PAGE. ALWAYS.

- Your heading — match your résumé exactly
- Date
- Contact name and title
- Organization address
- Salutation: Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. [Last Name]:
- Body: three to four paragraphs
- Closing: “Sincerely,” then your typed name

October 21, 2026

Dr. Robert Turner
Director of Localization
Lionbridge Technologies
123 Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Dr. Turner:

NO NAME LISTED?

“Dear Hiring Manager:” — but search LinkedIn first.

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Paragraph by Paragraph



FIRST PARAGRAPH

Name the exact job title and organization. Introduce yourself — major and graduation date. Say one specific, true thing about why them. Then name the three skills from the posting you are about to prove.

BODY PARAGRAPH

One paragraph per skill, or one combined. Tell the story behind each: what you did, how, and what resulted. Summarise rather than walking through your entire history.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

Thank them. One sentence on what you would contribute. Repeat your contact information. “Sincerely,” and your name.

Try: “My experience with ___, ___, and ___ would be an asset to your team.”

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What Makes a Cover Letter Fail

- Typos, grammar errors, or last company's name left in — instant disqualifier
- Rambling with no clear focus
- Self-focused: every paragraph starts with “I” and is about what you get
- Bland, interchangeable text that any candidate could have sent
- Apologising for what you lack instead of arguing what you bring

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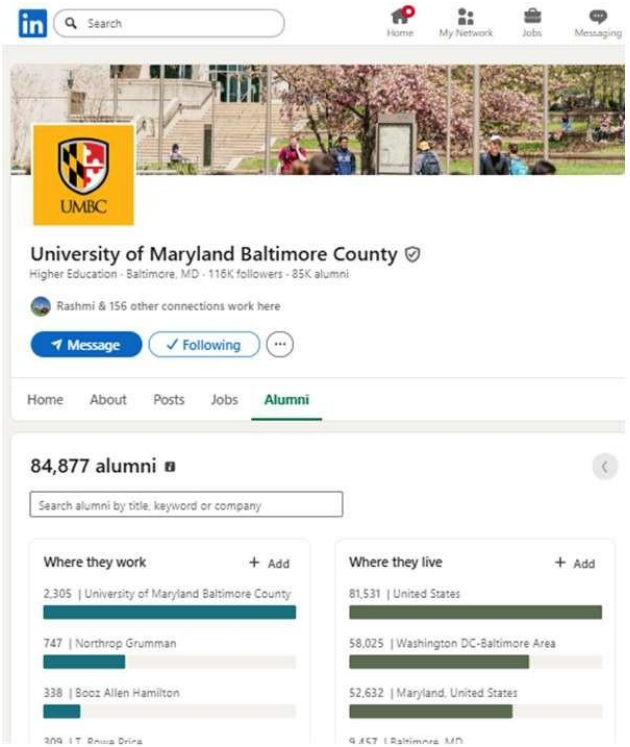
PART FOUR

Online Presence

LinkedIn: Your Résumé, Working Overnight

- Headline: not “Student at UMBC.” Try “Applied Linguistics Senior | Corpus Analysis & ESL Instruction”
- About section: three short paragraphs in your own voice
- List every language with honest proficiency
- Featured section: pin your portfolio pieces
- Connect with UMBC alumni already doing the work you want
- Ask two professors for recommendations before you graduate



UMBC alumni answer students. They were you, recently.

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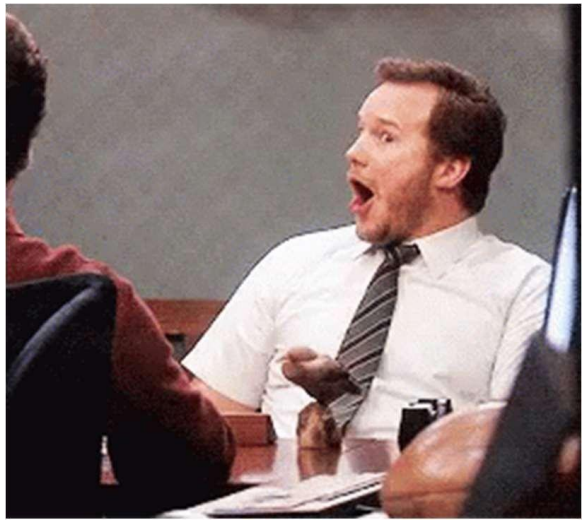
PART FIVE

The Interview & The Thank-You

Before the Interview

- Research the organization: what they do, who they serve, recent news
- Reread the posting and map each requirement to one of your stories
- Prepare six to eight STAR stories — they will cover almost any question
- Prepare your own questions.
- Virtual: test camera, mic, lighting, and background the day before
- Have your résumé, the posting, and a notepad within reach
- Plan to join or arrive ten minutes early



Six to eight stories, reshaped on demand. Not twenty memorised answers.

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The STAR Method

S

SITUATION

Set the scene in one or two sentences. Where, when, what was going on.

T

TASK

What were you specifically responsible for? Not the team — you.

A

ACTION

What did you actually do? This is the longest part. Use “I,” not “we.”

R

RESULT

How did it turn out? Quantify it if you can. What did you take from it?

Most people under-tell the Action and skip the Result entirely. Do not.

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Activity: Build a STAR Answer Together

“Tell me about a time you had to explain something complex to someone outside your field.”

SITUATION	Where were you? What was the setting?
TASK	What did you need to get across, and to whom?
ACTION	How did you adapt the explanation? What did you change?
RESULT	Did they get it? How did you know?

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Questions They Ask, Questions You Ask

EXPECT THESE

- Tell me about yourself
- Why this role, and why us?
- Tell me about a time you worked on a team that disagreed
- Describe a time you received difficult feedback
- What would you do if a project changed direction midway?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?

ASK THESE

- What does success look like in the first 90 days?
- How does the team handle feedback and revision?
- What is the biggest challenge facing this team right now?
- What does professional development look like here?
- What do you personally enjoy about working here?

NOT IN THE FIRST INTERVIEW

Salary, vacation, and remote-work questions come once they want you.

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The Thank-You Letter

- Send within 24 hours. Email is the standard now
- Panel interview? Send a separate, different note to each person
- Reference something specific from the conversation — that is the whole point
- Reaffirm your interest and add one thing you did not get to say
- Keep it short. Four or five sentences
- Proofread it harder than you proofread the résumé

Most candidates skip this. That is exactly why it works.

Subject: Thank you — Localization Analyst interview

Dear Dr. Turner,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me yesterday about the Localization Analyst role. I especially enjoyed hearing how your team handles terminology consistency across Spanish and Portuguese markets.

Our conversation reinforced my interest in the position. The corpus work I did on register variation at UMBC is close to the terminology auditing you described, and I would be glad to put it to work on your team.

Please let me know if there is anything further I can provide. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,
Maria Ramirez

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Practise Before It Counts



- Free for every UMBC student through the Career Center
- Record yourself answering real questions, then watch it back
- Filter practice sets by industry and role
- Written guidance on each question type

Watching yourself back is uncomfortable, and it is the fastest improvement you will get.

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Your Next Steps

1. **THIS WEEK**
   Update your résumé and upload it to Handshake under Documents

2. **THIS WEEK**
   Fix your LinkedIn headline. It takes four minutes

3. **BEFORE YOU APPLY**
   Book a Career Center appointment for a résumé review

4. **ONGOING**
   Draft your six to eight STAR stories and keep them in one document

UMBC Career Guide

Résumés pg. 18–25 • Letters pg. 30–37

What can I do with my major?

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The Career Center Is Free. Use It.

Résumé & cover letter reviews
In person or virtual, by appointment

Mock interviews
With a career coach, or on your own in Big Interview

Drop-in hours
Mon–Thu, 2–4 pm | Virtual express: Tue 5–7 pm, Fri 2–4 pm

Handshake
Jobs, internships, events, and employer connections

Career coaching
Decision-making, grad school, salary negotiation

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Upcoming Events

UMBC Discovery Recruitment Event – Register Today!

Networking dinner with students and a keynote speaker

October 22, 4 – 7 p.m.

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THANK YOU

Questions?

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