

What is a credential file? A credential file (also referred to as a "placement file" or "dossier") is a professional collection of documents sent to prospective employers or graduate schools during a candidate's application process. Contents usually include a cover page, current résumé, academic transcript, and three to five professional references.

Do I need a credential file? Very few Washington school districts still require a complete credential file. Some districts will accept credential files as an option but others will not accept them at all. Since the need to create a credential file depends on where you are applying, be sure to research the application requirements of your targeted school districts. Even if you choose to not create a complete file, you will want to assemble and organize your application materials in order to facilitate a productive, professional and timely job search.

Do I need an electronic file? You will need the ability to obtain, store and upload electronic documents. You can manage this on your own or pay for an online service that can submit your application materials per your instructions. *Interfolio* is the leading provider of credential (dossier) processing services and is recommended by many universities to be secure, easy to use, and affordable.

Creating a self-managed credential system.

1. Collect, organize and store the following documents most likely to be requested by employers:

Current résumé

Develop a targeted, attractive, error-free résumé that will advertise your qualifications and background.

Résumé guidelines: <http://spu.edu/depts/cdc/students/gethired/resumes.asp>

Academic transcript

Usually an unofficial copy of your transcript is requested, but once your degree is posted you may want to retain a copy of your official transcript as well. Order transcripts: <http://spu.edu/depts/sas/students/transcripts.asp>

Letters of recommendation

- Obtain 3-5 letters of recommendation from individuals who can speak to your professional abilities. Typical references may include your university supervisor or faculty, supervising teacher, principal or superintendent, current or former employers, or supervisors of volunteer work.
- A letter of recommendation should be typed on official letterhead, dated, signed and should include the writer's contact information. You will want to obtain or create an electronic copy as well as keep the hard copy original. Be sure to send a thank-you note to your letter writer.
- If an employer requires a **confidential** letter of recommendation, you may need to request the letter from your reference writer directly through the employer's online application system. Another option is to obtain confidential letters using a credential file service such as *Interfolio* which will allow you to maintain and send confidential letters to multiple employers. (Be sure to affiliate with SPU if you open an *Interfolio* account.)
- It is important to maintain current letters of recommendation that best reflect your recent experiences and abilities. *The CCC does not recommend using letters more than 5 years old in your job search.*



Additional supporting documents that are sometimes requested:

Cover letter - If a cover letter is listed as an option on the application, it is best to include one. See <http://spu.edu/administration/center-career-calling/get-hired/cover-letters> for guidelines.

Test Results (PRAXIS II, WEST-B, WEST-E) - Retain a copy of your test scores once you have passed the appropriate exam(s). Additional copies of WEST-B/ WEST-E: www.west.nesinc.com
Additional copies of Praxis II: <http://www.ets.org/> .

Student teaching evaluations - Refer to your Student Teacher Coordinator for details on how you will receive your final evaluation or to request a letter of reference. Direct questions to the SPU School of Education Field Placement Office: soeinfo@spu.edu, 206-281-2214.

Certification documents - The SPU School of Education will mail your certification to you. For an additional copy, contact the Washington State Office of Student Public Instruction at <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/Replacement.aspx>

2. Scan hard-copy documents and store electronically. Create PDF versions of all documents. Maintain a back-up file.
3. Create a hard-copy file with photo copies of at least 1 complete set of your credentials. Retain the originals.
4. Have mailing supplies on-hand, including 9x12 envelopes, address labels, and postage.

How do I send my credentials?

You are responsible for supplying your credentials/application materials as instructed by the employer. Take note of posted deadlines and be prepared to send your materials on time. It is very important that you follow whatever process is indicated in the job posting or online application. Submit exactly what is requested, and not more. If there is an option to submit certain documents, it is usually best to do so.

If submitting documents electronically, save as a PDF to retain formatting. If asked to cut and paste content into an online application, check for formatting changes and edit as needed. Always triple check for errors!

If mailing credentials, do not fold or staple. Create a cover page and put contents in the order requested. Type the address label and send in a 9x12-inch envelope.

How do I maintain my file?

Even when you are happily employed, it is a good idea to update your materials every few years:

- update contact information, transcripts, test scores and certifications as necessary
- revise your résumé to reflect new achievements
- keep in touch with your professional contacts
- replace older, less valuable letters with newer letters from current positions
- retain back-up files in both hard-copy and electronic formats

Can I still get help from the SPU Career Center?

ABSOLUTELY! We want you to be successful in your job search. The Center for Career and Calling's career counselors are available to meet individually with undergraduate students and alumni by appointment and can assist you with [résumés](#), [job search strategies](#) and [interview skills](#). Graduate students are encouraged to utilize our online resources, attend our workshops and events, and/or request our referral list of career coaches in the community. Please see <http://spu.edu/administration/center-career-calling/resources-for-graduate-students> .