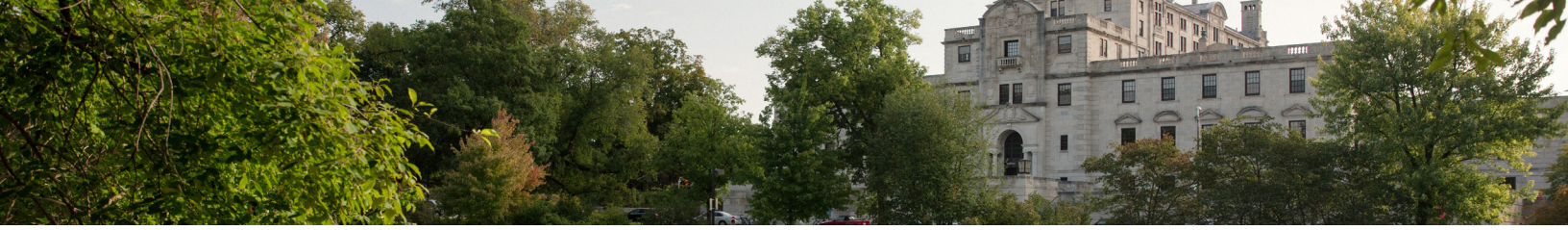


# U.S. EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO HIRING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



## KEY POINTS

Student immigration statuses offer work authorization opportunities for international students and recent graduates to work in their field of study without much paperwork or any cost to the employer.

## STUDENT IMMIGRATION STATUSES

Most international students come to the U.S. on an F-1 or J-1 nonimmigrant visa. Each status has a different set of regulatory requirements for employment. These requirements are outlined below.

### HIRING F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FOR AN INTERNSHIP/CO-OP

#### CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

CPT is work authorization issued by the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) at ISU. CPT is an academic learning experience, which allows a student to apply theoretical knowledge and skills gained through coursework in a work environment. CPT can be used during the fall, spring, or summer sessions, and can be authorized as full-time CPT (working more than 20 hours per week) or part-time CPT (working 20 hours or fewer per week).

#### ELIGIBILITY

- Student must be in valid F-1 status and have been enrolled in degree-seeking status for at least one academic year
- Experience must be directly related to student's major

#### DURATION

Students must apply each semester they want to engage in CPT and usually may not engage in more than 364 days of full-time CPT per educational level.

#### EMPLOYER ROLE

Provide student a job offer letter on letterhead and use the CPT I-20 to complete I-9 for student, if paid.

#### STUDENT ROLE

Students must apply for CPT with ISSO and receive CPT authorization prior to beginning work.

#### COST AND PROCESSING TIME

There is no cost to employers!  
Processing typically takes 2 weeks to receive CPT authorization.

### HIRING F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AFTER DEGREE COMPLETION

#### OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

OPT is available to students after they have completed their degree. OPT (post-completion) is work authorization issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

\* Graduate students completing a creative component, thesis, or dissertation are eligible for OPT once they complete all coursework, excluding research credits.

#### ELIGIBILITY

- Student must be in valid F-1 status and have been enrolled in degree-seeking status for at least one academic year
- Experience must be directly related to student's major

#### DURATION

- OPT is issued for a maximum of 12 months
- Students who graduated in a STEM degree program and whose employment meets the eligibility requirements, can apply for an additional 24 months of work authorization called STEM OPT

#### EMPLOYER ROLE

Applying for post-completion OPT is solely the responsibility of the students and requires no action by the employer. Use OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) to complete I-9, if paid.

#### STUDENT ROLE

Students must request an OPT I-20 from ISSO and submit an OPT application to USCIS. Students must receive the EAD card prior to starting work.

#### COST AND PROCESSING TIME

There is no cost to employers!  
Processing typically takes 2–4 months.

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## HIRING J-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

### ACADEMIC TRAINING

International students in J-1 status have similar employment opportunities through Academic Training. Academic Training can be used before completion of studies for internship/co-op experiences or after degree completion for internship/co-op or full-time employment opportunities.

### ELIGIBILITY

- Must be in valid J-1 status and have been enrolled in a degree-seeking status for at least one semester
- Experience must be directly related to student's major

### DURATION

Students must apply each semester they want to engage in Academic Training while still a student. Most students may be authorized for up to 18 months of Academic Training in total. If a student completes a PhD, they are allowed an additional 18 months of Academic Training (for a total of 36 months). Academic Training cannot exceed the amount of time spent in the J-1 program.

\*Non-degree-seeking students may have additional time restrictions.

### EMPLOYER ROLE

Provide student a job offer letter on letterhead and use the resulting Academic Training DS-2019 to complete I-9 for student, if paid.

### STUDENT ROLE

Students must apply for Academic Training with ISSO and receive Academic Training authorization prior to beginning employment.

## RETAINING INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES

To continue employment beyond OPT or Academic Training, the most common option is for the employer to sponsor the student as an H-1B "temporary worker."

### H-1B

Applications for H-1B status, to perform duties in a specialty occupation requiring at least a bachelor's degree in that specialty, can be submitted to USCIS by an employer on behalf of an international employee. There is a quota (or "cap") on the number of H-1Bs granted each year.

### DURATION AND TIMELINE

H-1B status is initially granted for up to 3 years with the option to renew for an additional 3 years. USCIS begins accepting applications each year on April 1 and typically accepts applications for a week before the annual H-1B quota is met.

### SPECIAL CASES

Non-profit research and institutions of higher education are not subject to the H-1B quota and can file H-1B application anytime.

### OTHER VISA OPTIONS

- H-1B1 - for citizens of Singapore and Chile
- TN - for citizens of Canada or Mexico
- E-3 - for citizens of Australia
- O-1 - for individuals with extraordinary ability

### LEARN MORE

For more information on F-1 and J-1 work authorizations, please visit our website at [www.isso.iastate.edu](http://www.isso.iastate.edu).



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