

Introduction

Employing international students can bring new perspectives and diversity to a business. Most of the paperwork needed to hire an international student is completed by the student's college/university and US Citizenship and Immigration Service ([USCIS](#)) (for (Optional Practical Training ([OPT](#))). Students must be eligible to work in the United States and have the correct hiring documents to complete the [I-9](#) (Employment Eligibility Verification). Since each institution has different policies related to curricular-related employment, students should speak to the Designated School Official ([DSO](#)) at their institution. It is important to be sure that the student with the [F-1](#) visa is maintaining student status and following regulations as stated in work authorization.

Overview

International students obtain a student visa to pursue a degree or exchange program in the United States. These visas allow students to work in jobs related to their **major** field of study. Most educational institutions sponsor two types of non-immigrant student statuses, [F-1](#) and J-1. The [F-1](#) visa allows students to accept employment for "practical training," under certain conditions. The J-1 visa is used for the Exchange Visitor Programs administered by the Department of State (DOS). [Click here for J-1 visa information.](#)

Employment

For F-1 students, any off-campus training employment must be related to their area of study and must be authorized prior to starting any work by the Designated School Official (DSO) at their school who is authorized to maintain the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System ([SEVIS](#)) and USCIS. The employer will supply an offer letter to confirm the employment needed for [Form I-20](#) completion. Form I-20 is required for hiring.

Internships

Students, in general, must have completed one academic year (fall/spring semester) in F-1 status and must maintain their F-1 status to be eligible for employment. There are two types of internships, CPT and OPT. Students are responsible for ensuring their paperwork is completed by their institution and provided to their employer.

CPT – Curricular Practical Training

[CPT](#) training will be authorized by the educational institution (not USCIS) for F-1 students participating in an internship program. The college or university Designated School Official (DSO) will be the contact for any questions regarding CPT. It is important to note that international students on F-1 visas are eligible for both CPT before finishing their studies, as well as 12 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT). Students who work full-time on CPT for one year (12 months) or more are not eligible for OPT. CPT training must be completed before graduation, while OPT training can be completed before or after graduation.

OPT – Optional Practical Training

OPT training must be authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) with a recommendation from the college/university DSO which issued the I-20 for the CPT. Students are eligible for 12 months of OPT for each degree level. Students who have received OPT permission must apply for an Employment Authorization Document ([EAD](#)) by the USCIS. Students who have an OPT internship in STEM-related fields may be eligible for the [OPT STEM Extension](#).

OPT STEM Extension (after the 12-month OPT)

Students who obtain a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) may be eligible for an additional 24 months of OPT. Students who are participating in OPT training and have a pending STEM extension application can continue working for up to 180 days while the application is pending.

After The International (F-1) Student Graduates

With a bit of planning ahead, an employer can hire international students to continue to work for them in the [H-1B](#) visa category for a total of six years (authorization is granted in two three-year periods). The H-1B is a temporary working visa for workers in a "specialty occupation."

There is an [annual cap](#) that can be granted initial H-1B status. In order to qualify for one of these spots, employers must pre-register prospective applicants and, unless demand is really low, those registrations are included in a random selection process. Only those with registrations are eligible to then file H-1B cap-subject petitions that year. The cap does not apply to H-1B workers who are petitioned by or employed at an institution of higher education (or an affiliated or related nonprofit entity), a nonprofit research organization, or a government research organization. [USCIS](#) uses the information provided during the electronic registration process to determine if a petition is subject to the cap.

<u>CPT – Curricular Practical Training</u>	<u>OPT – Optional Practical Training</u>
<p>The international student is responsible for applying for the CPT. The employer usually needs to provide a letter to confirm the student's internship offer.</p> <p>To participate in CPT, the student must remain full-time status during the academic year.</p> <p>CPT training must be completed before graduation.</p> <p>CPT training must relate directly to the student's major area of study.</p> <p>Reporting and work regulations are mostly the same as they are enforced by NAFSA guidelines.</p> <p>Students on F-1 visas are eligible to use either the CPT or OPT while working on their degree.</p>	<p>The international student is responsible for applying for the OPT. OPT can be granted to the student with or without an offer of employment.</p> <p>OPT training can be completed before or after graduation.</p> <p>Students are eligible for 12 months of OPT for each degree level.</p> <p>OPT must be authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) with a recommendation from the college/university DSO that issued the I-20 for the CPT.</p> <p>The school DSO recommends the student's OPT in SEVIS. The student must apply for work authorization through USCIS. If the OPT is approved, the Employment Authorization Document EAD will be issued.</p>
<p>Students who work full-time on CPT for 12-months or more are not eligible for OPT. ICE states "part-time CPT is fine and will not stop students from doing OPT."</p> <p>To ensure students don't go over 12 months of CPT and become ineligible for OPT, UW-Madison offers this CPT calculator.</p> <p>CPT training will be authorized by the educational institution (not USCIS) for F-1 student employment. Students work with their school DSO to complete the Form I-20 needed for employment.</p> <p>During the school year, F-1 students are only eligible for part-time CPT (20 hours/week). During break periods between semesters and summer break, students are eligible for full-time CPT (up to 40 hours/week).</p> <p>Additional CPT FAQs Study in the States Student and Exchange Visitors Program International Students and Social Security Numbers</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">OPT – Optional Practical Training STEM Extension</p> <p>Students who are participating in an OPT internship in STEM-related fields may be eligible for the OPT STEM Extension.</p> <p>To complete the STEM Extension, students should follow the instructions of their school DSO and work with their employer to complete the required documents. These instructions include applying for the employment authorization (EAD), and Form I-983.</p> <p>Employers must be actively enrolled in USCIS' E-Verify Employment Eligibility Verification Program.</p> <p>Employers must prepare and implement a formal training program (Form I-983) to support the student's academic learning through practical experience. Students will submit the I-983 with the training program.</p>

Hiring International Students – Additional information

- [Miami University](#)
- [Wright-State University](#)
- [University of Dayton](#)
- [Hiring International Students and DEI Plan](#)
- [GoInGlobal – Career Guides and H1B/OPT](#)

