HIRING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Hiring an international student or graduate can make your organization more competitive in the global marketplace. Their experience comes with knowledge of different cultures, markets, languages, and skills.

This tip sheet is way to inform employers on the benefits and ease of hiring international students as well as de-mystifying the process.

**Hiring an F-1 International Student for an Internship - CPT**

**Curricular Practical Training (CPT):** Work authorization that allows F-1 students to accept practical training in their academic field after one year of full-time study. Internship programs are some of the most common types of CPT opportunities for international students. Students can choose to work full or part-time during their internship. In some cases, graduate students who are required by their academic program to participate in an internship in the first year do not have to complete one full academic year before they are eligible.

**Duration:** There is no limit, but 12 months of full-time CPT eliminates eligibility for OPT. Part-time CPT employment does not affect eligibility for OPT.

**Employer Role:** Applying for CPT is solely the responsibility of the student and therefore requires no action on the part of the hiring organization other than providing an offer letter with basic details (such as dates of training; hours per week; and duties and responsibilities).

**Student Role:** After the student has been offered an internship, they submit an online application to their school with internship and employment details. This process is facilitated by our International Student Scholar Services office. Per U.S. immigration regulations, students who engage in part-time or full-time CPT must be full-time students during the academic year. They do not need to be enrolled full-time during official breaks, such as summer.
**Hiring an F-1 International Graduate for Full-Time Employment - OPT**

**Post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT):** Work authorization that allows F-1 status students who have graduated to gain practical work experience related to their major field of study.

**Duration:** 12 months for F-1 students, with possibility for extension for students who earned a STEM eligible degree.

**Employer Role:** Applying for OPT is *solely the responsibility of the student* and therefore *requires no action on the part of the hiring organization*.

**Student Role:** Obtaining OPT work authorization is a two-step process:

1. Student submits a request for OPT recommendation which is processed and approved by staff from our International Student Scholar Services office.
2. Student submits completed OPT application, supporting documentation, and required fee to the USCIS to secure OPT work authorization. Once approved, the USCIS issues an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card as proof of work authorization for the 12-month period.

**Hiring an F-1 STEM Graduate for Practical Training—36 Month STEM OPT**

F-1 student status holders who have graduated with an approved degree in Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) to gain extra practical work experience related to their STEM field.

**Duration:** 24 months in addition to the 12 months of post-completion OPT (for 36 months total).

**Employer Role:**

- Be enrolled and in good-standing with E-Verify.
- Prepare and implement a formal training program to support the student’s academic learning through practical experience. The training program is signed by both the employer and student and submitted to the International Student Scholar Services office for approval. A report of the student’s progress is submitted to the student's international student services office mid-way and at the end of the program.
- Report termination of employment to the student's International Student Scholar Services office.
- Provide an employment opportunity like U.S. workers in duties, hours, and compensation.
Student Role: The student submits the completed I-983 training plan as part of their STEM OPT request to the International Student Scholar Services office, which processes the STEM OPT recommendation for the student. The F-1 student mails their completed OPT application, supporting documentation, and required fee to USCIS. Once approved, USCIS issues an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card as proof of work authorization for the allotted period. The fees associated are paid by the student.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HIRING MYTHS

There are myths and misconceptions surrounding employers hiring international students for OPT (Optional Practical Training) or CPT (Curricular Practical Training). Here are a few common ones:

1. Myth: It's complicated and risky for employers to hire international students on OPT/CPT.
   - Reality: Hiring international students on OPT or CPT is generally straightforward. They are authorized to work in the U.S. during their OPT or CPT period as long as the employment is directly related to their field of study.

2. Myth: Employers have to sponsor international students for work visas during OPT/CPT.
   - Reality: During OPT/CPT, international students are already authorized to work in the U.S. under their F-1 visa status. They do not require additional sponsorship for work authorization during this period.

3. Myth: International students on OPT/CPT are not allowed to work off-campus.
   - Reality: While there are specific rules governing off-campus work for international students, they are permitted to work off-campus under certain conditions, such as internships directly related to their academic program.

4. Myth: Hiring international students on OPT/CPT is more expensive for employers.
   - Reality: The cost to hire international students on OPT/CPT is generally comparable to hiring domestic students or recent graduates. Employers do not incur additional costs related to visa sponsorship during the OPT/CPT period.
5. Myth: International students on OPT/CPT have limited work hours or duration.
   o **Reality:** During OPT, students typically have up to 12 months of work authorization, which can be extended for an additional 24 months for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. CPT is typically authorized for specific academic periods or for a specific number of hours per week.

   o **Reality:** Employers are free to hire the most qualified candidates for their positions, regardless of citizenship status. Discrimination based on national origin or citizenship status is prohibited under U.S. law.

7. Myth: International students on OPT/CPT cannot be hired for full-time positions.
   o **Reality:** International students on OPT/CPT can be hired for full-time positions, provided the employment is directly related to their field of study and they are within the authorized period of their OPT/CPT.

It's essential for both international students and employers to understand these realities to navigate the hiring process effectively and legally. Employers who are unsure about hiring international students on OPT/CPT can consult with their legal counsel or human resources department to ensure compliance with immigration and employment regulations. They can also refer to additional resources below.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

UAlbany’s International Student Scholar Services: [https://www.albany.edu/international-student-scholar-services](https://www.albany.edu/international-student-scholar-services)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services: [https://www.uscis.gov/](https://www.uscis.gov/)

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP): [https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/)