U.S. Employer's Guide to Hiring International Students

The purpose of this guide is to demonstrate the simplicity of hiring international students from the George Washington University for internships or for career opportunities after graduation.

The model for international students to obtain temporary U.S. work authorization is well-established and the application process is straightforward.

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC

GW | Center for Career Services

Overview

All international students who are neither U.S. Citizens nor Permanent Residents enroll in academic programs under one of two non-immigrant visa types; as F-1 or J-1. Since the majority of international students at the George Washington University (GW) are F-1 student visa holders, the focus of this guide will be on how to hire an F-1 student.

The content of this guide includes:

Internships   Full-Time   Long-Term   More Information   Resources

Hiring a F-1 International Student for an Internship

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is work authorization that allows F-1 student visa holders to accept employment in their academic field after two consecutive semesters of full-time study. GW students are eligible to work part-time during the academic year (no more than 20 hours a week) or full-time during the summer.

Employer Role: Applying for CPT is solely the responsibility of the student and therefore may require minimal action on the part of the hiring organization.

Duration: For GW F-1 students, the internship start and end dates must correspond to the University's academic schedule for that respective academic year.

Cost and Processing Time: There is no cost to the employer. The processing and approval time for CPT may vary.
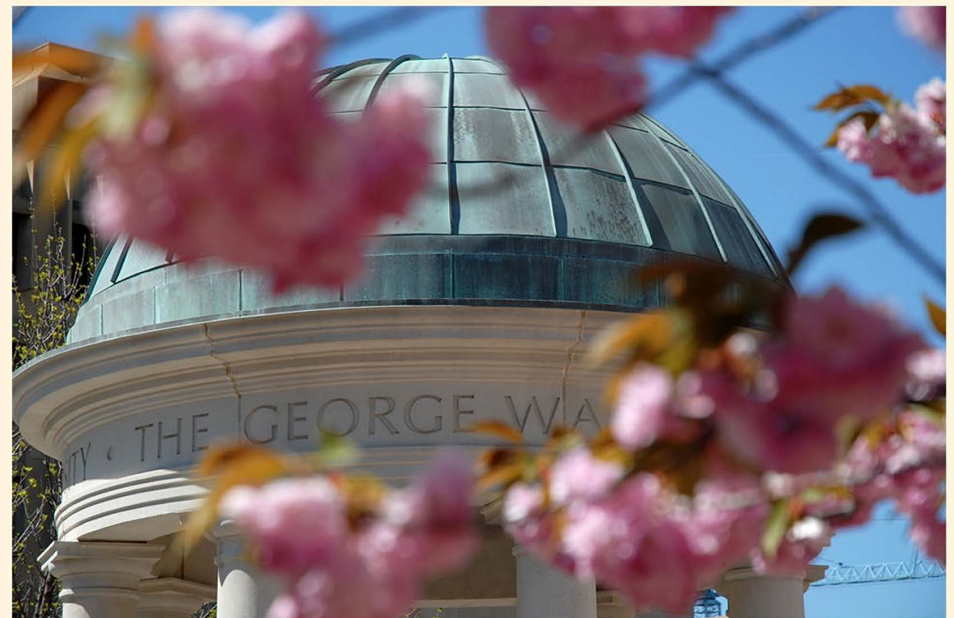
Hiring a F-1 International Graduate Student for a Full-Time Internship

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is work authorization that allows F-1 student visa holders who have graduated to obtain practical work experience in their major or field of study.

Employer Role: Applying for OPT is solely the responsibility of the student and therefore requires limited action on the part of the hiring organization. OPT is granted to the student with or without an offer of employment.

Duration: 12 months (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics - STEM - up to 24 months) for F-1 graduates.

Cost and Processing Time: There is no cost to the employer. GW's International Services Office processes the student's OPT documentation. The United States Citizenship & Immigratoin Service processing time for OPT takes an average of 30-60 days but can take up to 3 months; therefore, students are encouraged to apply as early as 90 days prior to graduation. The new employee must have his/her EAD card to begin work.

Hiring and Retaining Long-Term International Graduates

H-1B Visa: Applications for H-1B visas are submitted to the USCIS by the sponsoring company on behalf of the international employee. Only 65,000 H-1B visas are available to candidates who have completed undergraduate degrees, and an additional 20,000 visas are available for those who have completed graduate degrees in the U.S.

Employer Role: The employer is responsible for filing the H-1B application on behalf of the international employee. Many companies find that retaining an experienced immigration attorney is helpful to facilitate the process.

Duration: H-1B visas are initially granted for three years, but can be renewed for a total of six years.

Cost and Processing Time: Inclusive of attorney and USCIS application fees, the total cost to apply for an H-1B visa is between $5,000-7,000. The earliest date to apply for an H-1B is April 1. Historically, there has been a high demand for H-1B visas so it is strongly recommended that the applications arrive at USCIS on April 1 or soon thereafter. Approved H-1B visas become effective October 1.

Special Cases: Some non-profit, research and educational institutions are able to secure additional H-1B visas not subject to the yearly quota of 85,000. Through a treaty with the U.S. citizens of Chile and Singapore are provided with special allocation of 6,800 H-1B visas.

In April 2008, a law was established to enable those with an approved H-1B application to remain employed during the transition period between the end of OPT and the start of H-1B. The law eliminates any gaps in employment previously experienced in the transition from the OPT to H-1B.

Other Visa Options and Fees

TN-1 Visa: Canadian or Mexican citizens who will be working in, but not limited to, the areas of economics or management consulting may be eligible for the TN-1 visa. The current processing fee is $140.00. The visa is valid for up to 3 years after which the employee must request an extension to stay through his/her employer.

E-3 Visa: Australians working in professional positions in the U.S. may be eligible for the E-3 visa. The current processing fee is $390.00. The visa is valid for 24 months but may be renewed.

L-1 Visa: The L-1 visa is an intercompany transfer visa. Employees must work at the same or an affiliated company outside of the U.S. for a minimum of 1 year in a management level role before being transferred to the U.S. The current processing fee is $150.00. The visa is valid for 3 years and may be extended for an additional 2 years, until the employee has reached the maximum limit of seven years.

Possible Additional Fees: In some cases there is a required visa issuance reciprocity fee, if applicable. Please consult the United States Department of State's Visa Reciprocity Tables to determine whether you must pay a visa issuance reciprocity fee and the cost.

Verifying Work Authorization: Consult your HR representative to determine what documentation will be needed to complete the I-9 form (Employer Eligibility Verification) for CPT. Proof of U.S. work authorization under OPT can be verified by the student's EAD card.

Social Security Number: Once a student has secured an I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 Student Status) endorsed for CPT or OPT by the GW International Services Office he or she is then eligible to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) up to 30 days before the start of employment. To obtain an SSN, the student must apply with the local Social Security Administration office.

For employers wishing to hire a J-1 visa holder, there is no fee involved or action to be taken. The J-1 student simply obtains authorization from his/her visa sponsor (e.g. The Fulbright Program) to work for up to a total of 18 months. It is the sole responsibility of the student to complete the online application process and the approval is generally granted within 5-10 business days.

Resources

United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS)

www.uscis.gov/portal/sites/uscis

United States Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE)

www.ice.gov

United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

www.dhs.gov/index.shtm

The George Washington University
Center for Career Services

careerservices.gwu.edu/employers

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