



What Employers Should Know About Hiring International Students

International students represent a robust and talented candidate pool, and in a number of cases, can be hired in much the same way that domestic candidates can. While the most common student visa type at the University of Washington is an F-1 visa, and this overview provides insights to hiring a student on an F-1 visa, it should not be assumed that all international students hold an F-1 visa.

The Career & Internship Center is not able to answer additional detailed questions about this process, or advise around specific organizations or situations - we encourage you to consult your internal HR or legal counsel for further advice as needed.

The transition in presidential leadership during 2021 also has the potential to cause profound shifts in policy. For the most up-to-date information, we always encourage you to consult internal counsel and/or US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

If a potential hire approaches you with questions about their own authorization or eligibility, you can direct them to the UW International Student Services Office (ISS): <https://iss.washington.edu/>

Internship Hiring (part-time or full-time, while a student is pursuing their degree)

Hiring an F-1 student for an internship generally requires no more paperwork than hiring a domestic student. F-1 students pursuing Curricular Practical Training (CPT) must have completed a full academic year at a college or university in the United States and also be enrolled for internship course credits in their University of Washington academic department for the experience.

What is Curricular Practical Training (CPT)?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is temporary authorization for practical training directly related to a student's major field of study, like an internship —paid or unpaid. Almost all paperwork and authorization is handled by the University of Washington's International Student Services Office.

- **Candidates must have:**

- Completed one full academic year at a United States college or university.
- Be enrolled in a major, and be pursuing an internship related to that major.
- Receive academic credit through their major department for the experience.
- As each student's situation may be unique, students with questions or concerns should be directed to UW International Student Services.

- **Employer responsibility:** Applying for CPT is primarily the responsibility of the student and often requires no action on the part of the hiring organization. However, the employer may need to issue a simple letter or documentation of sorts to confirm the internship offer as the CPT process cannot be initiated until a student has received an offer.

- **Student responsibility:** After the student has been offered an internship, they initiate a conversation with the University of Washington's International Student Services (ISS) Office. This process is facilitated directly between the student and the UW ISS office.

- **Cost:** There is no cost to the employer for CPT.
- **Best practices:** While it is the student's responsibility to make sure their authorization is approved before they begin work, we recommend that employers double check that the student's form I-20 is up-to-date before the student begins any work or training. The employer name and work authorization period should be listed on page 2 of the I-20.

Full Time Hiring (Post-Graduation Internship or Employment)

Hiring an F-1 student for a short-term full-time opportunity also generally does not require a cost to the employer and can provide you with a great candidate pipeline.

What is Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

Optional Practical Training provides F-1 students with an opportunity for hands-on work experience (work authorization) related to their academic field of study. Initial authorization is for up to 12 months.

- **STEM OPT Extension:** Students in specific STEM fields are eligible for an extended work authorization period as part of their OPT (up to 24 additional months, for a total of 36 months).
- **Employer responsibility:** Applying for OPT is entirely up to the student, and does not require that they have already received an offer of employment. Once you have hired the individual, it is advised that you review their Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Additional detail in 'Best Practice' below.
- **Student responsibility:** The student must work with both the University of Washington International Student Services Office and United States Custom & Immigration Services during the process. Minimal fees are incurred by the student during the process, and paperwork processing timelines can exceed 60 days in some cases.
- **Cost:** There is no cost to the employer.
- **Best Practice:** While it is the student's responsibility to make sure their authorization is approved before they begin work, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) advises employers to review the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) when onboarding new employees working under the Optional Practical Training program. Students should not begin any work or training until the OPT application has been approved by USCIS and the student has received the EAD by mail.

Hiring and Retention Beyond OPT Timeframes

This is the step at which employers encounter the work authorizations, fees, and employer responsibilities that most employers associate with the hiring of international candidates. As you can see, there are many opportunities prior to this point where you can hire international students without any additional burden being placed on your organizational processes.

Resources on navigating processes and options here can be found through a variety of resources – internal HR or legal counsel, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services [website](#), or even organizations like SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management).