



# HIRING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FOR FULL-TIME JOBS

## FOR EMPLOYERS

### **Can I hire international students and graduates to work full-time at my organization?**

Yes! International students who are within 90 days of completing their studies are eligible to work in the U.S. in their field of study as part of their student status benefits.

### **Does this have a special name?**

It does – OPT or Optional Practical Training. Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization. The purpose of OPT is to apply the knowledge and skills they gained in the classroom in the real world.

### **Does this mean I am sponsoring the student? Is there a cost?**

No to both. The student remains on a student visa during OPT. OPT is not a separate visa category and does not require "sponsorship" from an employer. There is no cost involved for the employer, however the student pays a fee.

### **How long does this last?**

For STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) roles, the candidate may work for 3 years on OPT using their student visa. For non-STEM fields, they have 1 year of OPT.

### **What happens when OPT ends?**

After OPT has ended, the employee would need to be on a working visa. There are several working visas for international hires, the most common being the H1-B visa.

### **What are the employer's responsibilities during OPT?**

The student must work a minimum of 20 hours in their field of study to maintain their immigration status. The employer is required to follow labor laws.

### **My company has a policy that says we don't sponsor/won't hire international candidates, but I'd like to consider it. How do I start this conversation?**

We understand that immigration policy can seem quite complicated! However, the only requirement for an employer to hire an international student for an internship is as simple as one sheet of paper, that the student submits themselves.

### **Why should I hire an international student?**

International students are enormously talented. They speak multiple languages, are adaptable collaborators and problem-solvers, and bring a flexible, global perspective to the workplace. We consistently hear from employers who hire international students that they are among their most dedicated and creative employees.

# FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

## WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT FULL-TIME JOBS IN THE U.S.?

**Am I able to work full-time in the U.S.?** Yes! International students that have graduated are eligible to apply for employment authorization to work in the U.S. for 12 months or up to 3 years (certain STEM majors).

**Does this have a special name?** It does – [Optional Practical Training \(OPT\)](#) is an employment authorization for F-1 students. “Optional” because you have the option to remain in the U.S. to work after graduation, and “Practical Training” because the purpose of OPT is to apply the skills you gained at MSU at a U.S. employer.

**Does this mean I need sponsorship from an employer?** No. The OPT program is part of your student visa, however, once it ends, if you wish to remain in the U.S., you will need to find sponsorship elsewhere. Most often, this is done through an employer-sponsored H1-B visa.

**An employer asked me “Am I eligible to work in the U.S.?” How do I answer this?**

Your F-1 visa allows you to work in the U.S.! You should apply for OPT through OISS to work in your field of study. The employer does not need to sponsor you since you are applying for OPT.

**An employer asked me “Do you now, or in the future, require sponsorship?” How do I answer this?**

“Yes” - in the future, you would require sponsorship when you are no longer on your student visa.

**What if the employer says they don’t hire international students?**

Certain employers may have a policy stating they don’t hire international students. Some employers are very rigid on this, and some are more flexible. Be polite – oftentimes, especially with big organizations, the decision on this is out of the hands of who you are speaking with. If they seem somewhat open, you can share the research you have done about their organization and why you would make a wonderful fit.

**How do I bring up my visa status with a potential employer?**

You don’t need to bring your status up right away. If you can, take time to get to know their organization better, and talk to them about how your skills and experiences would benefit their company. As the process moves along, you can share that you’ll need an employment offer letter from them.

**How do I apply for OPT?**

To apply for OPT, students should review the [Optional Practical Training \(OPT\) Information Guide \(PDF\)](#)

**When Should I apply for OPT?**

You should apply for OPT 90 days prior to your completion of your studies. Review the [Optional Practical Training \(OPT\) Information Guide \(PDF\)](#) carefully to learn about the application process

**How long does it take to apply for OPT?**

Students should apply for OPT as early as possible. OISS may take 7-10 business days to recommend students for OPT. The student must mail the complete application to the government and this process may take approximately 3 months.

**How do I maintain my status while on OPT?**

Students are required to work a minimum of 20 hours in their field of study. Students must report any employment or address changes to the U.S. government within 10 days.