

# Employer guide for hiring international students and graduates

## Purpose of this guide

This guide serves to inform representatives of companies in the United States about the options that ASU international students/graduates have for internships and work during or upon completion of their college degree.

Employers are invited to contact the Career and Professional Development Services office at ASU for clarification of content in this guide.

The ASU International Student and Scholars Center (ISSC) serves international students/international graduates directly and does not give immigration advice or respond to questions from employers; however, students may contact the ISSC for questions about employment regulations.

This guide is intended to provide general information only and is not intended to serve as legal advice. Employers are encouraged to consult an experienced U.S. immigration attorney for legal advice.

**Hiring  
international  
students and  
graduates**

**More than  
13,000  
international  
students call  
ASU home**

**F-1 Visa:  
Practical training**

**What you need  
to know about  
work  
authorization**

**ASU resources**

**ASU is #1  
for hosting  
international  
students**

**Frequently  
asked  
questions**

**ASU welcomes  
students from  
136 countries**

**Becoming an  
international  
friendly  
employer**



## Why hire international students and graduates?

**Determination and resiliency** – Having earned a degree in a country outside of their home country, international students have faced and overcome many challenges through hard work and perseverance.

**Loyalty** – Many international students choose to study in the U.S. because they want to gain meaningful employment experience in the U.S. They are highly motivated to do well and advance professionally.

**Global and intercultural fluency** – Studying in a different culture and often in a second or third language gives international students an opportunity to develop their cross-cultural communication skills which they bring as an asset to your team.

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion** – International employees bring rich and diverse experiences and global viewpoints to your workplace.

“The United States is a leader in innovation, buoyed by the dynamism of our colleges and universities. We have the chance to continue this forward momentum as long as we remain committed to making the most of our world's brainpower. I have seen how a diverse population of creative problem-solvers, bringing together the widest possible array of perspectives, positions us to maintain that leadership.”

-Dr. Michael Crow, ASU President

International students/graduates at ASU are some of the best and brightest students at our university. They are motivated and driven students, often overlooked in the talent search because employers are intimidated by hiring an international candidate.

This guide is meant to help change that for you and your company.

International students/graduates are in the U.S. on non-immigrant student visas (F-1 and J-1), and they are eligible to accept employment under certain conditions.



## Additional ASU resources:

### Expectations of employers

Career and Professional Development Services at Arizona State University adheres to the NACE Principles for Professional Practices for Career Services and Employment Professionals. We require any employer recruiting at ASU to abide by these principles.

Please visit our website to learn more about our recruiting policies:

<https://career.asu.edu/recruiting-policies>

### Contact information for Employers:

480-965-8124

[employers.careerservices@asu.edu](mailto:employers.careerservices@asu.edu)

### Expectations of international students/graduates

All questions related to regulations around work and your work authorization should be directed to the ASU International Students and Scholars Center (ISSC). The Employer should not contact the ISSC; rather, ask the international student/graduate to do so.

International students/graduates may first consult the ISSC website for clarification about work authorization: <https://issc.asu.edu/employment/students-fj/f-1-opt-12-month/post-opt>

### Contact information for Students:

480-727-4776

[issc@asu.edu](mailto:issc@asu.edu)



## **What you need to know about work authorization**

Work authorization refers to an individual's legal right to work in the U.S. There are several ways that international students and graduates can obtain work authorization. For the 95% of students on a non-immigrant F1 student visa, some common types include Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT). Students are typically eligible for practical training after completing one academic year.



### **F-1 Visa: Practical Training**

Practical training is a legal means by which F-1 students can obtain employment in areas related to their academic field of study. Students, in general, must have completed one academic year (approximately nine months) in F-1 status and must maintain their F-1 status to be eligible for practical training.

There are two types of practical training:

1. Curricular Practical Training
2. Optional Practical Training

### **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

Students gain practical experience in their field of study through off-campus internships as required by their academic program of study. Students may qualify on a semester by semester basis and CPT starts at the beginning of the semester or summer session. Work can be paid or unpaid and is limited to part-time (20 hours/week) work during the school year with full-time employment possible during summer break or for some other situations. CPT is approved by ISSC at ASU (not by USCIS) and CPT is processed within 10 business days of receipt.

#### **Student Role**

- Consult your academic department to determine eligibility and program-specific application processes
- Enroll in internship credits
- Obtain employer letter or job offer
- Submit CPT I-20 request e-form to ISSC
- Apply for a Social Security Number
- Provide key documents to employer such as CPT I-20, passport, I-94, and social security card

#### **Employer Role**

- Provide an employer letter or job offer (template available from ISSC)
- Complete a Student Placement Agreement (SPA) if you don't already have one on file with the school
- Some academic departments may ask you to complete an internship employer evaluation



## Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Students and graduates gain practical experience in their field of study by working, interning, or volunteering off-campus for a total of 12 months (OPT) and an additional 24 months for students earning a degree in a STEM field (STEM OPT). Pre- and post-OPT provide opportunities for students to work during their academic program and after graduation. Work can be paid or unpaid (except STEM Extension), must be at least 20 hours/week, and must be directly related to program of study. OPT approval is granted by USCIS. Students/graduates may apply for OPT before they have secured a job offer and may begin working when their start date arrives and their employment authorization (EAD) card is in their possession. ISSC recommends applying for OPT 100 days before degree completion.

Fortunately, there is little paperwork for the employer that hires F-1 or J-1 International Students. All paperwork is handled by the student, the university, and the International Students and Scholars Center (ISSC) at ASU.

### Student Role

- Submit OPT e-form to ISSC
- Pay \$100 OPT case management fee
- Collect OPT I-20
- Prepare and mail complete OPT application to USCIS, including a check for the \$410 OPT filing fee
- If a request for evidence (RFE) is issued, provide additional documentation to USCIS
- Report employment, once it is secured within 10 days, as well as any changes to employment during the OPT period
- Submit appropriate documents for any change of visa status

### Employer Role

- All paperwork is handled by students, the school, and USCIS for OPT
- Provide a job offer letter for student records (not required at time of OPT application)
- Provide the company or organization's EIN and other biographical information as needed by the student to report their employment
- STEM Extension requires employers to be enrolled with E-Verify ([www.uscis.gov/everify](http://www.uscis.gov/everify))
- STEM Extension also requires the student and employer to complete and sign a training plan (Form I-893) together
- Lastly, STEM Extension requires the employer to sign an annual evaluation completed by the student and to notify USCIS if termination occurs for any reason

Most international students in the U.S. are in a STEM field. They can work for your company for 3 years without sponsorship.



## Other Types of Work Authorization and Sponsorship

Employers that want to hire an international applicant for a longer period may consider sponsorship, such as that associated with an H-1B visa. The H-1B allows U.S. businesses to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations with theoretical or technical expertise in a certain field. The application process includes a petition filed on behalf of the employee by the employer and a lottery. Approved petitions are valid for an initial period of up to 3 years with an extension available for an additional 3 years. There are several other visa options including TN-1, TN-2, L-1, and O-1 visas. For more information, visit the USCIS website (<https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states>).



### Becoming an International-Friendly Employer

The best way to attract international talent is to accurately reflect your ability to hire for CPT/OPT or willingness to sponsor individuals on your job postings. In Handshake, you have the opportunity to specify this by answering a few basic questions about work authorization. International students and alumni will be able to filter search results to those that meet their the work authorization needs. For detailed instructions, visit <https://support.joinhandshake.com/hc/en-us/articles/360000175727-Employers-About-Work-Authorization->.

## Filters

### Work authorization

- ☐ Will sponsor or doesn't require US work visa
- ☐ Accepts OPT/CPT

A sample of all CPT/OPT and sponsored positions are also featured on the International Students and Scholars website through a special RSS feed, to increase visibility of postings. (<https://issc.asu.edu/students/employment/opportunities>)

## Additional Resources

- **Hiring F1:** <https://issc.asu.edu/departments/hiring-f1>
- **CPT Employer Offer Letter:** [https://issc.asu.edu/sites/default/files/cpt\\_employer\\_letter\\_002.pdf](https://issc.asu.edu/sites/default/files/cpt_employer_letter_002.pdf)
- **Interstride Hiring Guide:** [https://careercenter.umich.edu/files/cc/the\\_interstride\\_international\\_student\\_hiring\\_guide\\_v2020.4.pdf](https://careercenter.umich.edu/files/cc/the_interstride_international_student_hiring_guide_v2020.4.pdf)
- **USCIS Handbook for Employers:** <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/form-i-9-resources/handbook-for-employers-m-274>







## Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

### **Q: How long can international students/ graduates work in the United States with their student visa?**

F-1 visa students are eligible for:

- STEM OPT: STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics. A student knows if they are eligible for STEM OPT: It is likely why they selected the degree in the USA; because these fields allow the student to work up to 3 years in the USA.
- Students who complete bachelor, master and doctoral degrees in STEM fields may work for 24 additional months of OPT at an E-Verify employer.
- However, if they work full time for one year or more on full-time CPT during their program of study, they are not eligible for OPT. Students and scholars on a J-1 visa are usually eligible to work up to 18 months following graduation, three years for post-doctoral work. They may also be eligible to work part-time during their program of study.
- A student must contact the International Students and Scholars Center (ISSC) at ASU for clarification regarding the regulations with their work authorization. Employers are not to contact the ISSC.

### **Q: Isn't it illegal to hire international students/graduates because they do not have a green card?**

No. Federal regulations permit the employment of international students on F-1 and J-1 visas within certain limits. These visas allow students to work in jobs related to their major field of study.

F-1 students can work on "practical training."

J-1 students may work on "academic training."

### **Q: How do I become an E-verify employer?**

In addition to the student completing a program of study in a qualifying field, the employer must be enrolled in E-Verify in order for a student to qualify for the STEM OPT extension.

E-Verify is an electronic program through which employers verify the employment eligibility of their employees after hire. The program was authorized by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA). The employer must remain as a participant in good standing with E-Verify for the duration of the OPT employment. The employer must also provide the company's E-Verify number to the student. The number is required when completing the I-765 application for the STEM OPT extension.

More information about the E-Verify program can be found here:

<https://www.e-verify.gov/employers>.

### **Q: Won't it cost a lot of money and involve a lot of paperwork?**

The International Students and Scholars Center at ASU handles the paperwork involved in securing the work authorization for F-1 and J-1 students. In fact, a company may save money by hiring international students because the majority of them are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare tax requirements.

### **Q: How can international students/graduates work in the United States?**

F-1 visa students are eligible for:

- CPT, or Curricular Practical Training. This means that they are receiving academic credit for the work experience, such as internship credit. CPT lasts as long as a semester of college, which is approximately 15 weeks.
- OPT, or Optional Practical training, is 12 months (1 year) of work in addition to CPT. Most students pair these experiences together. Example: Intern for a company for one semester and then follow that with one year of work with the company.
- OPT can be either before or following graduation, or a combination of the two.

## Frequently asked questions (FAQs) continued...

### **Q: Don't international students/graduates need work authorization before I can hire them?**

No. International students must have work authorization before they begin actual employment, but not before they are offered employment.

Many F-1 students will be in the process of obtaining work authorization while they are interviewing for employment. Students can give employers a reasonable estimate of when they expect to receive work authorization.

Most international students/graduates are on a F-1 visa.

### **Q: What if I want to continue to employ international students/graduates after their work authorization expires?**

With a bit of planning ahead, an employer can hire new college grads/former 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." The application procedure to the USCIS is straightforward. The job must meet two basic requirements:

- The salary must meet the prevailing wage as defined by the Department of Labor.
- A bachelor's degree is a minimum normal requirement for the position.

### **Q: What is a "Work Authorization" and what does it look like?**

The work authorization looks different depending on the type of visa that the student possesses.

F-1 student visa:

- For CPT, F-1 students receive authorization from the school (NOT from USCIS) on page two of the student's I-20.
- For OPT, F-1 students receive from USCIS an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), a small photo identity card that indicates the dates for which they are permitted to work.

### **Q: Can I hire international students/graduates as volunteer interns?**

If the internship involves no form of compensation and is truly voluntary, the students may volunteer without having to do any paperwork with the International Students and Scholars Center.

To truly "volunteer," the student/graduate must be serving a population that is less fortunate than themselves and be working for no monetary income; usually for less than a few hours a week. For example, one may volunteer at a senior citizen's home or at an animal clinic.

When considering volunteering or doing an unpaid internship, international students should be very careful to make sure that the internship really meets all seven of the criteria established by the U.S. Department of Labor. More information can be found on the ISSC website: <https://issc.asu.edu/employment/students-fj/volunteering-unpaid-internship>. International students/graduates are not required to obtain OPT or CPT work authorization to engage in a legitimate unpaid internship or volunteer position.

### **Q: Doesn't an employer have to prove that international students/graduates are not taking jobs from a qualified American?**

No. American employers are typically not required to document that a citizen of another country did not take a job from a qualified American if that person is working under an F-1, J-1 or H-1B visa.

For STEM OPT extension, employers must sign form 1-983 verifying that the international applicant is not replacing a full- or part-time temporary or permanent U.S. worker.

When employers wish to hire a foreign citizen on a permanent basis and sponsor them for a permanent resident status or "green card", then the employer must document that they did not turn down a qualified American applicant for the position.

