U.S. Employer’s Guide to Hiring International Students from Iowa State University

KEY POINTS

Student immigration statuses offer work authorization opportunities permitting international students and recent graduates to work in their field of study without much paperwork or any cost to the employer.

Employers can hire an international student, and that student can engage in approximately 1 year of work before finishing their degree and 1-3 years of work after finishing their degree without employer sponsorship.

REASONS TO HIRE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

• Iowa State University is consistently highly ranked in Engineering, Business, Agriculture, and many other undergraduate and graduate programs. Companies that exclude international student applicants from the interview process are missing nearly 11% of ISU’s high-achieving students.

• International students have learned how to thrive in a country and culture other than their own. Graduating from a U.S. institution shows tremendous adaptability and perseverance, great skills for any prospective employee.

• Trying to break into a new market? International students can help your company understand unfamiliar business cultures and break down communication barriers in order to expand and grow in a global marketplace. International students are fluent in English and typically one or more additional languages.

• Hiring international students from other cultures can help your company gain diverse perspectives, which lend a competitive edge to your business.

STUDENT IMMIGRATION STATUSES 101

Most international students come to the U.S. on an F-1 or J-1 nonimmigrant visa. What’s the difference between F-1 and J-1 status?

Most international students come to the U.S. on an F-1 or J-1 nonimmigrant visa, both of which provide temporary student status. Each status has a different set of regulations that dictate requirements for employment. These requirements are outlined in this packet.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
HIRING F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO WORK FOR AN INTERNSHIP/CO-OP

Curricular Practical Training

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is work authorization issued by the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) at Iowa State University. CPT is an academic learning experience which allows a student to apply theoretical knowledge and skills gained through coursework in a work environment. CPT can be used during the fall, spring, or summer sessions, and can be authorized full-time for more than 20 hours per week or part-time working 20 hours or less per week.

ELIGIBILITY:
• Must be in valid F-1 status
• Must have been enrolled at ISU in a degree-seeking program for one academic year
• Must be making normal progress towards degree
• Experience must be directly related to major

DURATION:
Students must apply each semester they want to engage in CPT and generally may not engage in more than 364 days of full-time CPT.

EMPLOYER ROLE:
Provide student a job offer letter on letterhead that includes:
• Name and address of company
• Address of location where student will be engaged in CPT (if different from above)
• Job title
• Brief explanation of job duties and responsibilities
• Start and end dates
• Number of hours per week

STUDENT ROLE:
Students must apply for CPT with ISSO and receive CPT authorization prior to engaging in any CPT experience.

COST AND PROCESSING TIME:
There is no cost to employers! Processing times differ depending on how long it takes students to register for the CPT course and successfully complete the online CPT workshop. Once all the requirements are fulfilled, ISSO can issue CPT authorization within 10 business days.

MORE INFORMATION:
Regulations: 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)
ISSO's CPT Frequently Asked Questions
HIRING J-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO WORK FOR AN INTERNSHIP/CO-OP

Pre-Completion Academic Training

Pre-Completion Academic Training (AT) is work authorization issued by the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) at Iowa State University. AT is an academic learning experience which allows a student to apply theoretical knowledge and skills gained through coursework in a work environment. AT can be used during the fall, spring, or summer sessions.

ELIGIBILITY:
- Must be in valid J-1 status
- Must be enrolled in a non-degree, bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral program
- Must have been enrolled for at least one semester in current program at ISU
- Must be making normal progress toward degree
- Experience must be directly related to major

DURATION:
Students must apply each semester they want to engage in pre-completion AT. Students may use up to 18 months of pre-completion AT, but cannot exceed the amount of time spent in their J-1 program. Non-degree students may have additional time restrictions.

EMPLOYER ROLE:
Provide student a job offer letter on letterhead that includes:
- Name and address of company
- Address of location where student will be engaged in AT (if different from above)
- Job title
- Brief explanation of job duties and responsibilities
- Start and end dates
- Number of hours per week
- Supervisor name, phone number, and email

STUDENT ROLE:
Students must apply for AT with ISSO and receive AT authorization prior to engaging in any AT experience.

COST AND PROCESSING TIME:
There is no cost to employers! Processing times differ depending on how long it takes students to register for the AT course. Once all the requirements are fulfilled, ISSO can issue AT authorization within 10 business days.

MORE INFORMATION:
Regulations: 22 CFR 62.23(f)(3)
AT Frequently Asked Questions
HIRING F-1 INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES TO WORK AFTER DEGREE COMPLETION

Optional Practical Training (Post-Completion)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) (post-completion) is work authorization issued by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). OPT is available to a student after they have completed their degree.*

*Graduate students completing a creative component, thesis, or dissertation are eligible for OPT once they have completed all coursework, excluding research credits.

ELIGIBILITY:
- Must be in valid F-1 status
- Must have been enrolled at ISU in degree-seeking program for one academic year (fall and spring semester)
- Experience must be directly related to major

DURATION:
OPT is issued for a maximum of 12 months. Students who graduated in a STEM-designated degree program and whose employment meets the eligibility requirements, can apply for an additional 24 months of work authorization, STEM OPT. Please see page 5 for more information about STEM OPT.

EMPLOYER ROLE:
Applying for OPT is solely the responsibility of the student and requires no action on the part of the employer.

STUDENT ROLE:
Students must apply for OPT recommendation from ISSO and submit their OPT application to USCIS. Students must receive the OPT Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) from USCIS prior to engaging in any employment.

COST AND PROCESSING TIME:
There is no cost to employers! It can take ISSO up to 10 business days to issue the OPT I-20. It can take up to 90 days for USCIS to process an OPT application.

MORE INFORMATION:
Regulations: 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)
ISSO’s OPT Frequently Asked Questions
Students who have completed a degree in a STEM field may be eligible for a 24 month extension of OPT, known as STEM Optional Practical Training (STEM OPT). Similar to post-completion OPT, STEM OPT is a work authorization granted by USCIS.

**ELIGIBILITY:**
- Must be in valid F-1 status
- Must be in a period of 12 month post-completion OPT
- Must have completed a STEM degree listed on STEM Designated Degree Program List
- Must be employed in a paid position and working a minimum of 20 hours per week
- Employment must be directly related to major
- Student and employer must complete Form I-983 Training Plan
- Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify

**DURATION:**
STEM OPT is a 24 month extension.

**EMPLOYER ROLE:**
Employers must be willing to complete Form I-983 (Training Plan) and complete evaluations during the STEM extension. If the student is terminated or departs an employer, the employer is required to notify the ISU International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) within five business days.

**STUDENT ROLE:**
Students must complete Form I-983 with their employer, request a STEM OPT recommendation from ISSO, and submit their STEM OPT application to USCIS prior to the end date of their first 12 months of OPT.

**COST AND PROCESSING TIME:**
There is no cost to employers! It can take ISSO up to 10 business days to issue the STEM OPT recommendation. It can take 90 days or more for USCIS to process an OPT application. If an application is filed with USCIS before the end date of the student’s post-completion OPT, students may continue working for up to 180 days while the application is pending.

**MORE INFORMATION:**
- Final Rule on STEM OPT
- ISSO’s STEM OPT Frequently Asked Questions
- STEM Designated Degree Program List
- Form I-983 Instructions for Non-ISU Employers
HIRING J-1 INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES TO WORK AFTER DEGREE COMPLETION
Post-Completion Academic Training

Post-Completion Academic Training (AT) is work authorization issued by the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) at Iowa State University. Post-completion AT is practical training after the student completes their degree. AT is an academic learning experience which allows a student to apply theoretical knowledge and skills gained through coursework in a work environment.

ELIGIBILITY:
• Must be in valid J-1 status
• Experience must be directly related to major

DURATION:
Non-degree, bachelors, and master’s students may use up to 18 months of AT, but cannot exceed the amount of time spent in their J-1 program. Non-degree students may have additional time restrictions. Doctoral students may use up to 36 months of AT for post-doctoral training, but cannot exceed the amount of time spent in their J-1 program.

EMPLOYER ROLE:
Provide student a job offer letter on letterhead that includes:
• Name and address of company
• Address of location where student will be engaged in AT (if different from above)
• Job title
• Brief explanation of job duties and responsibilities
• Start and end date
• Number of hours per week
• Supervisor name, phone number, and email

STUDENT ROLE:
Students must apply for AT with ISSO before completing their degree and receive AT authorization prior to engaging in any AT experience. Employment must start no later than 30 days after degree completion.

COST AND PROCESSING TIME:
There is no cost to employers! Processing times differ depending on how long it takes students to register for the AT course. Once all the requirements are fulfilled, ISSO can issue AT authorization within 10 business days.

MORE INFORMATION:
Regulations: 22 CFR 62.23(f)(3)
AT Frequently Asked Questions
Applications for H-1B temporary worker status are submitted to USCIS by the sponsoring company on behalf of a candidate. There is a limited allotment of H-1B visas per year: 65,000 H-1B visas for international candidates with undergraduate degrees and an additional 20,000 H-1B visas for candidates with graduate degrees.

**DURATION AND TIMELINE:**
H-1B status is initially granted for up to 3 years with the option to renew for an additional 3 years. USCIS begins accepting applications each year on April 1 for employment to begin the following October 1st and only accepts applications until they reach the limits mentioned above (the H-1 quota is typically reached in a week or less).

**EMPLOYER ROLE:**
The employer is responsible for filing the H-1B application. Often, employers will work with an experienced immigration attorney to facilitate the process.

**COST AND PROCESSING TIME:**
H-1B application fees vary depending on the size of the company. Processing times typically range from 1-3 months (unless premium processing is requested) but can change without notice. Please speak with an immigration attorney for more details.

**Special Cases:** Non-profit, research, and educational institutions are not subject to the H-1B allotment quota and can file an H-1B application at any time.

**Some Other Visa Options**
- H-1B1 – for citizens of Singapore and Chile.
- TN – for citizens of Canada or Mexico.
- E-3 – for citizens of Australia.
- O-1 – for individuals with extraordinary abilities in the field.

**Additional Resources**
- [F-1 Regulations](#)
- [J-1 Regulations](#)
- [Study in the States](#)
- [Department of Homeland Security](#)
- ISU International Students and Scholars Office
- ISU Career Services
- Immigration Attorneys

If you or the students you are working with have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO).

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