

International Student Career Advising FAQ

The following FAQ is meant to serve as a guide for Career Advisors and not as alternative to visa advising. While the below information can help inform and enrich career advising appointments with international students, advisors should consult the Global Engagement Office whenever questions or uncertainties arise. The Global Engagement Office can be reached at (402) 280-2221.

What types of visas are most common for international students?

International students are typically studying under either an F-1 or J-1 visa. If a student is studying for the full four years, they are likely under an F-1 visa. If a student is here only for a semester, they are likely under a J-1 visa. While students should be aware of their own visa type, this isn't always the case. If you are unsure of a student's visa type, you can ask a student whether they have an I-20, as this is an official document issued to F-1 students. If the student says they have a DS-2019, this is an official document issued to J-1 students. If you would like to learn more about the difference between F-1 and J-1 visas, check out the following site: <https://www.immi-usa.com/j1-vs-f1-visa/>

Work Authorization During a Student's Academic Program

Can international students work on campus?

Yes, both F-1 and J-1 are allowed to work on campus as early as their first semester. Students can work on campus for 20 hours per week while school is in session and 40 hours per week during official University holiday breaks, such as summer, winter, spring, and fall break. Students are only eligible to engage in on-campus employment while their academic program is active. This means that if a student completes their degree or program, they are no longer eligible for on-campus work.

Do international students need authorization to work on campus?

No, working on campus does not require U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approval and therefore does not require official authorization.

What constitutes on-campus work for an international student?

The official definition of on-campus work as defined by USCIS is one of the following:

- Work performed on the school's premises directly for your school (including work affiliated with a grant or assistantship).
- Work performed for on-location commercial firms which provide services for students on campus, such as the on-campus B&N bookstore, Starbucks, or Sodexo (Employment with on-site commercial firms which do not provide direct student services, such as a construction company building a school building, is not deemed on-campus employment for the purposes of the rule). When in doubt, refer the student to the Global Engagement Office to make sure the work is eligible.
- Work performed at an off-campus location which is educationally affiliated with the school. The educational affiliation must be associated with the school's established curriculum or related to contractually funded research projects at the post-graduate level. In any event, the employment must be an integral part of the student's educational program.

Undergraduate students looking to work on campus will typically fall under the first or second bullet. In addition, all on-campus positions must compensate students according to University Payroll standards - they may not

receive alternative compensation through gift cards or other forms of undocumented payment. If you are unsure whether a student's proposed employment falls under the "on-campus" banner, consult with the Global Engagement Office.

Can international students work off-campus during their academic program?

Yes, with authorization.

What are the requirements for students to work off-campus during their academic program?

F-1 students are eligible to work off-campus during their academic degree if they are authorized for Curricular Practical Training (CPT). CPT employment is defined by the USCIS as "alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school."

To be eligible for CPT employment:

1. The student must have been enrolled in school full-time for one year (two academic semesters) on valid F1 status (except for graduate students where the program requires immediate CPT). Note, if students engage in an English-language program prior to the start of their academic degree, time spent in the program will not contribute to the one-year requirement necessary for CPT eligibility.
2. The CPT employment must be an integral part of the student's degree program or requirement for a course for which they receive academic credit
3. They must have received a job offer that qualifies before the CPT authorization request is processed
4. **The job offer must be in the student's major or field of study as listed on their I-20 form.**

J-1 students are eligible to work off-campus during or following their academic program through Academic Training authorization. Academic Training is work, training, or experience **related to a student's field of study as listed on their DS-2019.**

Criteria for Academic Training includes:

1. Students must have a job offer in their field of study and obtained a written recommendation for Academic Training from their academic advisor in order to apply for Academic Training with the Global Engagement Office
2. The time students are authorized for academic training before their program completion will be subtracted from the total time of academic training for which they are eligible. Time allotted may not exceed "the period of full course of study" or 18 months, whichever is shorter. Completing more than one-degree program does not increase a student's academic training period. This means that if a student is here for one semester of study (~4 months), they will have ~4 months of academic training authorization, which they can either use during their academic program or immediately afterward.
3. A J-1 student may be authorized to work off-campus if "serious, urgent, and unforeseen economic circumstances" have arisen since acquiring J-1 status. Consult with the Global Engagement Office if you believe a student may be eligible.

How many hours can international students work per week?

Students can work a total of 20 hours per week when school is in session and can work a total of 40 hours per week during summer and official University breaks. The hour limit is a total of all jobs (on and off-campus) the student is currently engaged in and includes both paid and unpaid work.

Is there a limit to how much international students can work off campus during their academic program?

Students on an F-1 visa who engage in 12 months or more of full-time off-campus (CPT) work throughout their academic program will not be eligible for OPT (post-graduation work authorization). Refer to ***What are the requirements for students to work off-campus during their academic program?*** to review regulations surrounding J-1 visa work authorization.

How can I tell if a proposed internship is connected to an international student's field of study?

When a student is accepted into a U.S. program, they are issued either an I-20 form if they are an F-1 student or a DS-2019 form if they are a J-1 student. Their form will list their field of study. If a student has changed majors, they need to meet with the Global Engagement Office to make sure their form is updated with the correct major before being authorized for work connected to the new major.

The connection between a major and the intended employment should be direct and logical. If the connection feels like a stretch and the student engages in the work, it could cause issues for them should they decide to apply for OPT later on. Consult with the Global Engagement Office if you are uncertain about whether an intended internship connects with the field of study.

When does a student need to obtain a social security number?

Students who are working in the U.S. must obtain a social security number before they can begin working. In order to issue a Social Security number, the Social Security Administration requires evidence that the student:

- Is eligible to work in the U.S.
- Is a full-time student
- Has received a formal offer of on-campus employment, OR
- Has been authorized for off-campus employment through Curricular Practical Training, Optional Practical Training, or Academic Training.

If the student is unsure how to obtain a social security number, they should consult with the Global Engagement Office.

Work Authorization After a Student's Academic Program

Can F-1 students work off-campus after they graduate?

Yes, F-1 Students are eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) which will allow them 12 months of work authorization post-graduation.

When can an F-1 student begin applying for OPT?

Students can begin applying for OPT 90 days before completing their program and up to 60 days after. It takes an average of 3-5 months for OPT paperwork to be completed and for students to be issued an EAD card (which allows them to begin work). It is therefore strongly recommended that students apply for OPT as early as possible. If you are working with a student who is considering applying to OPT, encourage them to meet with the Global Engagement Office.

Can an F-1 student apply for OPT before they have a job offer?

Yes, students do not need to wait for a job offer to apply for OPT.

Can students leave the country after their program completion but before their OPT begins?

Yes, students can leave the country, but they may not be able to return if they do not have a job offer letter with them when they return to the U.S. Having an EAD card but no job offer may not be enough to give them access back to the United States.

How can I tell if a proposed job is connected to an international student's field of study?

When a student is accepted into a U.S. program, they are issued a I-20 form if they are an F-1 student. Their form will list their field of study. If a student has changed majors, they need to meet with the Global Engagement Office to make sure their form is updated with the correct major before being authorized for work connected to the new major.

The connection between a major and the intended employment should be direct and logical. If the connection feels like a stretch and the student engages in the work, it could cause them issues with U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services. Consult with the Global Engagement Office if you are uncertain about whether an intended job connects with the field of study.

How long can a student remain unemployed after their OPT begins before they are considered "out of status?"

Students can be unemployed for 90 days from the start of their OPT before they are considered out of status. Students who have the STEM extension are allowed an additional 60 days during the 24-month extension.

A student's OPT has started but they have not received their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card yet, can they keep working?

No, students cannot begin work until after they have received their EAD card.

Does OPT have to be full-time?

In most (but not all) cases, employment does not need to be full time. Types of OPT employment may include regular, paid employment, employment through an agency, or volunteer or unpaid internship for at least 20 hours per week.

A student is having difficulty finding employment but is volunteering. Could that count as OPT?

Yes. Many students are able to obtain experience that is most appropriate to their line of work by engaging in volunteer work or unpaid internships. This is possible during the standard 12-month OPT period. Work as a volunteer or unpaid intern must not violate any labor laws and should not be for less than 20 hours per week. Students should be prepared to document the fulfillment of these requirements upon request.

What is the STEM extension and who is eligible?

Eligible F-1 students with STEM degrees who finish their program of study and participate in an initial period of regular post-completion OPT (often for 12 months) have the option to apply for a STEM OPT extension. To qualify, the student's major's CIP code at Creighton University must align with the DHS's [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#). The extension would allow for an additional 24 months of work authorization. Consult with the Global Engagement Office to determine whether a major is designated for the STEM extension.

If a bachelor's level student does not use their OPT and then is admitted to a master's or PhD level program in the U.S., can they carry-over their unused OPT?

No, a student is issued 12 months of OPT for each degree level they complete and the OPT cannot be issued twice for the same degree level nor be carried over to a higher degree-level. If a student obtains a bachelors,

they are eligible for 12 months of OPT. If they then obtain a master's, they are eligible for another 12 months of OPT, and if they pursue a PhD they are eligible for 12 more months of OPT.

What resources exist for international students seeking internship and full-time job opportunities?

- Review job search resources specifically for international students:
<http://www.internationalstudentcareers.com/international-student-jobs/> does a nice job of outlining some of the key pieces like the importance of knowing your visa and researching companies that have sponsored H1B visas in the past.
- Take advantage of the John P. Fahey Career Center's guide for international students:
<http://www.creighton.edu/careercenter/students/internationalstudentresources/>. In addition to helpful strategies, our site links to resources students can use to identify H1B employers as well as directories of U.S. firms operating in foreign countries.
- Review International Organizations that align with the students interest, Georgetown put together a helpful list to get started: <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/850mbthodukt8npaxj0dlfqi0xuttaw3>