



WHEATON
COLLEGE

For Christ & His Kingdom

U.S. Employer Guide for Hiring F-1 Visa International Students





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**The purpose of this guide is to
inform U.S. Employers about:**

- Work authorization options for international F-1 visa students
- The ease of procedures and costs involved when hiring Wheaton College international students for internships or full-time opportunities after graduation



Legal notice: This guide is not intended to and does not serve as legal advice; it is for informational purposes only. Wheaton College International Student Advisors serve international students directly and do not give immigration advice or generally respond to employer questions. Content is subject to change. Employers are advised to consult an experienced U.S. immigration attorney with any additional questions.



Why Hire International Students?

Wheaton College international F-1 visa students represent over 90 countries and pursue a diverse array of degrees and career goals. They possess qualities that top employers seek:

- Global perspectives with diverse viewpoints and experiences
- Multilingual and intercultural communication skills that are vital for companies to compete in a global economy
- Effective leadership and teamwork skills along with the ability to adapt to changes and persevere.

Internships/Jobs during Degree Program

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for F-1 Students

**CPT for
F-1 Students**

WHAT IS IT?

- Off-campus work authorization for F-1 students who are currently pursuing degree programs at Wheaton and have completed one academic year.
- Employment must be related to student's field of study and can be paid or unpaid
- Typically issued for internships or short-term employment opportunities

**Please note: Work cannot begin until student obtains authorization from College and is issued a new CPT I-20 form.*

DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT

- Employment authorization is given on a semester-by-semester basis (*can be extended or renewed with advance approval*)
- Students are limited to part-time (20 hours or less per week) during the Fall/Spring semester and full-time work during the summer; some graduate students may be eligible for full-time CPT.

STUDENT'S ROLE

- Verify eligibility for CPT
- Obtain academic dept. approval & enroll in concurrent academic course as determined by dept., if applicable
- Submit complete CPT application to international student advisor (DSO) at least 7 business days prior to beginning employment

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- Provide student with an offer of employment on letterhead with: company address, dates of desired employment, the job responsibilities and whether employment is part or full-time.
- There is no cost to the employer and the CPT application is entirely the responsibility of the student

Employment After Graduation

Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Students

OPT for F-1 Students

WHAT IS IT?

- Employment authorization for F-1 students who have completed all coursework for academic program
- Employment must be related to student's major field of study and can be paid or unpaid
- Recommended by a Wheaton international student advisor (DSO) and authorized by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) based on student's petition for benefits

DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT

- Typically, 12 months of employment are granted
- Designated STEM majors working for eligible employers may extend (see next page)
- Full-time employment is allowed

STUDENT'S ROLE

- Verify eligibility for OPT
- Report desired employment to DSO through completion of OPT training module at: <https://iss.wheaton.edu/>
- Submit a completed and timely OPT application to USCIS in order to obtain approval prior to beginning employment
- Ensure work is related to field of study

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- Request a copy of the employment authorization document (EAD) from the student for I-9 purposes
- There is no cost to the employer and the OPT application is entirely the responsibility of the student
- Student can be approved for OPT without an offer of employment

**Typical processing time from submission to approval by USCIS is 90 days. Students may apply up to 90 days prior to and up to 60 days after program completion*

Employment After Graduation

STEM Extension Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Students

STEM OPT for F-1 Students

WHAT IS IT?

- Extension of student's 12-month OPT
- Student must be a recipient of a [STEM designated degree](#) and working/will work for an [E-Verify](#) employer
- Employment must be related to student's STEM major field of study
- Volunteer, unpaid and self-employment are not allowed
- May be based on a previously earned STEM Degree
- Recommended by a Wheaton DSO and authorized by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) based on student's petition for benefits

DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT

- An additional 24-month extension of the 12-month OPT for a total of 36 months of OPT work authorization
- Allows total of 2 lifetime STEM extensions, the 2nd after earning a new STEM-eligible degree at a higher level and obtaining a new higher level of 12-month OPT
- Full-time employment is allowed

STUDENT'S ROLE

- Verify eligibility for STEM Extension
- Report desired employment to Wheaton DSO through completion of STEM OPT training module at: iss.wheaton.edu/
- Submit a complete and timely [STEM OPT application](#) to USCIS prior to the end date of their 12-month OPT. Ensure work is related to field of study.

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- Student must be employed or have offer of employment from a company
- Must be participating in E-Verify and provide student with E-verify & EIN number
- Supervisor will document student learning, goals and assessments on Form I-983 at 6, 18 and 24 month mark.
- There is no cost to the employer
- See additional [STEM OPT Reporting Requirements](#)

**Typical processing time from submission to approval by UCSIS is 90 days. Students may apply up to 90 days prior to the end date of their 12-month OPT, but no later than their OPT end date*

Long-Term Employment in the U.S.

H-1B

H-1B

WHAT IS IT?

- Employer-sponsored visa that permits temporary employment in "specialty occupations"
- A limited number of H-1B applications are granted every year
- Exceptions to the quota are granted to some non-profit, research and educational institutions

DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT

- H-1B status is initially granted for a duration of up to 3 years, but can be extended or renewed up to a total of 6 years

STUDENT'S ROLE

- Student may be eligible for a "Cap-Gap" Extension of OPT (Optional Practical Training) while the H-1B petition is pending or waiting for the effective date
- Student may consult with a Wheaton international student advisor for instructions and eligibility

PROCESSING TIME

- Total processing time (including preparation & application) may take 2-6 months; renewals, extensions, & change of employer may be shorter
- For most private employers, H-1B applications should be submitted on April 1 for cap subject applications
- Approved applications are effective October 1
- Exceptions to the timeline may be granted to some non-profit, research, and educational institutions

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- The employer, with a qualified immigration attorney, is responsible for preparing and filing the petition
- Costs will include attorney and [USCIS application fees](#)
- The employer is responsible for filing a timely petition

Long-Term Employment in the U.S.

Additional Employment-Based Visa Categories

NON-IMMIGRANT TEMPORARY WORKER VISAS

- TN: NAFTA Professionals from Canada & Mexico
- E-3: Specialty Occupation Visa for Australians
- H-1B1: Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Professional-Chile, Singapore
- H-2A: Temporary Agricultural Worker
- H-2B: Temporary Non-agricultural Worker
- H-3: Trainee or Special Education Worker
- L-1: Intracompany Transferee
- O: Individual with Extraordinary Ability or Achievement
- P-2/3: Artist or Entertainer (Individual or Group)
- Q-1: Participant in an International Cultural Exchange Program

IMMIGRANT VISAS

There are several other visa categories that allow immigrants to work in the U.S. on a permanent basis. More information on these visa categories, fees, and application process are available here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate.html>

**Employers who have questions about their international candidate's ability to work in the U.S. should consult an immigration attorney.*

Resources

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

<https://www.eeoc.gov/>

U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet on Internships

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/71-flsa-internships>

U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS)

<https://www.uscis.gov/>

U.S. Department of State

<https://www.state.gov/>

E-Verify

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

American Immigration Lawyers Association

<https://www.aila.org/>

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