

GUIDE FOR HIRING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

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

- International students' F-1 work authorization options
- The ease of procedures and costs involved when hiring Fort Hays State University international students for internships or full-time opportunities after graduation
- How Career Services can support employers' recruiting efforts

Why Hire International Students?

- Fort Hays State University international students represent around 30 countries and pursue a diverse array of degrees and career goals. They possess qualities that top employers seek
- Global perspectives with diverse viewpoints and experience
- Multilingual and cross-cultural 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

The majority of FHSU international students are in F-1 immigration status that includes off-campus work authorization benefits during and after the academic program.

The remainder of this guide provides an overview of these work authorization options along with long-term employment visa options and resources. We hope the information will help to clarify and streamline the hiring process of international students.

Important Note:

Employers should note that a Social Security Number alone is not sufficient proof of work authorization for international students. It is critical that employers confirm an international student's work authorization prior to the employment start date to prevent any liability for the student and the employer in the future.

During Degree Program

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for F-1 Students

What is it?

- Off-campus work authorization for F-1 students who are currently pursuing degree programs at FHSU 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
- Authorized by Fort Hays State University (FHSU) International Student Services (ISS) Office

DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT

- Employment authorization is given on a semester by semester or summer basis
- CPT may be extended or renewed with advance approval
- Generally, 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

Processing Time

- 5 business days upon receipt of a complete CPT application to FHSU ISS

Student's Role

- Verify eligibility for CPT
- Obtain academic department approval & enroll in a concurrent academic course as determined by the academic department
- Submit complete CPT application to FHSU ISS at least 10-15 business days prior to beginning employment

Proof of Authorization

- A new CPT I-20 listing the authorized employer, address, dates of the authorization, and whether part-time or full-time employment has been granted on page 2
- Work cannot begin until student obtains authorization

Employer's Role

- Provide student with a letter of employment
- Request a copy of the CPT I-20 from the student for I-9 purposes
- There is no cost to the employer and the CPT application is entirely the responsibility of the student

After Graduation

Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Students

What is it?

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

Processing Time

- 10 business days upon receipt of a complete OPT application to FHSU ISS
- Once the application is mailed to the USCIS, processing time could be 4-12 weeks

Student's Role

- Verify eligibility for OPT
- Submit complete OPT application to FHSU ISS during final semester or two weeks after graduation

Proof of Authorization

- A new I-20 listing the authorized employer if a job offer has been received and dates of the requested authorization on page 2.
- Work cannot begin until student obtains EAD Card

Employer's Role

- Provide student with a letter of employment
- Request a copy of the I-20 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

After Graduation STEM Extension

Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Students

What is it?

- An extension of a student's 12-month OPT
- Student must be a recipient of a STEM designated degree and working 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 FHSU ISS and authorized by 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

Processing Time

- Typical time from submission to approval by USCIS 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

Student's Role

- Verify eligibility for STEM Extension
- Submit complete STEM OPT application to USCIS prior to the end date of their 12-month OPT
- Report employment and any changes to employment to FHSU ISS.

Proof of Authorization

- A new Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card/Form I-766) indicating start and end dates of extended work authorization
- If a timely STEM OPT application has been filed with USCIS, the student may work for up to 180 days after the end date of their 12-month EAD card

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
- Must complete I-983 Training Plan and attest that wages and compensation are commensurate with "similarly situated U.S. workers"

Long-Term Employment in the U.S. 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/renewed up to a total of 6 years

Processing Time

- Total processing time (including preparation & application) may take 2 to 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
- Exceptions to the timeline may be granted to some non-profit, research and educational institutions

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 should consult with FHSU ISS for instructions and eligibility

Proof of Authorization

- Employer will receive official approval letter from USCIS listing the effective date
- Students eligible for the “Cap Gap” Extension will be issued a new I-20 by FHSU ISS upon request

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 H-1B