

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EMPLOYMENT GUIDE

WORK AUTHORIZATION OPTIONS IN THE U.S.

JOB SEARCHING BASICS IN THE U.S.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES AT MSU

TRANSITIONING TO THE U.S. WORKPLACE

EMPLOYERS GUIDE TO HIRING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

CAREER ADVISOR GUIDE TO HELPING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

# INTRODUCTION



## Why did we design this guide?

In today's increasingly global economy, international students educated in the U.S. should be considered as a valuable part of the talent pool that universities provide to employers. International students bring unique benefits to the employers: diversity, adaptability, global perspectives and connections, to name just a few.

However, it can be very difficult for international students to navigate the U.S. job searching process. Both international students and U.S. employers can be unfamiliar with working visa options. For the universities, Career Advisors are also trying to receive necessary training to better support both parties.

This guide aims to help international students, U.S. employers, and university Advisors by providing the basic information and strategies to navigate the process.

## Who designed this guide?

This guide is designed by the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) at Michigan State University. Special thanks to the MSU Career Services Network, Global Talent Retention Initiative of Michigan for providing valuable information.

Should you have any question or edits to suggest, please contact OISS by emailing [oiss@msu.edu](mailto:oiss@msu.edu) or call via **517-353-1720**.

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# WORK AUTHORIZATION OPTIONS IN THE U.S.

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# WORK IN THE U.S. BEFORE GRADUATION

## On Campus Limitation

Students in F-1 and J-1 status are required to be full-time students and may work on-campus up to 20 hours or in the “practical training” options below.

## Practical Training Options

International students are eligible for temporary work authorization that permits them to engage in part- or full- time employment in their field of study.

### 1. Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT is temporary employment authorization directly related to a F-1 student’s academic program and granted by the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS).

CPT is typically authorized on a part-time (up to 20 hours a week) basis during the school year and can be authorized on a full-time (over 20 hours a week) or part-time basis during vacation periods. CPT gives students the possibility to work off-campus or to work for more than 20 hours a week on campus if certain qualifications are met.

Some types of CPT are as follows:

**Required for the degree program:** In order for training to be considered “required”, all students in the degree program must be required to complete an internship or practicum in order to receive their degree. A few programs at MSU have such requirements.

**Integral part of an established curriculum:** If the internship/work experience is not required, then it must be taken for academic credit. Students will work with their academic advisor to fill out the “CPT Authorization Form” issued by OISS.

The student must receive a job offer before securing the employment authorization, and thus will be unable to provide documentation at the interview stage. OISS needs a signed, written offer of employment on the company’s letterhead as part of the CPT application requirements.

**Proof of Work Authorization:** The employer and dates for which the student is authorized to work will appear on the student’s Form I-20 (certificate of eligibility). Students cannot begin work before the start date on the Form I-20, or continue working after the end date. CPT authorization may be renewable if the student continues to be eligible.

**To apply for CPT:** <http://dev.oiss.isp.msu.edu/files/2015/0367/4634/cpt.pdf>

### 2. J-1 Academic Training

J-1 students may apply for temporary work authorization called “Academic Training” (AT) either prior to or after completion of studies to accept positions within their field of study.

Students seeking or completing bachelor’s or master’s degrees are eligible for 18 months of AT. Students seeking or completing doctoral degrees are eligible for 36 months of AT.

Non-degree (exchange) students are eligible for AT authorizations matching the length of time they have spent studying in the U.S. Example: A one-semester (4-month) exchange student is eligible for up to 4 months of AT.

# WORK IN THE U.S. AFTER GRADUATION

The U.S. government allows students to apply for authorization to gain practical work experience to supplement their academic programs. Many employers find this to be a useful opportunity to hire a student with valuable international perspectives.

## 1. F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is defined as “temporary employment authorization directly related to the field of study”. F-1 students are eligible for up to 12 months of employment authorization under this category.

For students whose majors are given the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) designation, employment may be extended for an additional 24 months, if the F-1 visa holder is employed by an E-Verify employer. More information about STEM:

OPT is recommended by OISS at MSU and granted by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The application process can take several months.

**Proof of Work Authorization:** Students on OPT will receive an employment authorization document or EAD card. USCIS issues the EAD and it specifies the dates of authorized employment.

**To apply for OPT, finish the OPT course on D2L first:** <http://dev.oiss.isp.msu.edu/immigration1/workintheus/>

**2. J-1 Academic Training:** see the “before graduation” section.

# EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS

Beyond CPT, OPT, or AT, there are options for employing internationals.

## Temporary Worker (H-1) Visa

The H-1B visa allows foreign nationals to work in the United States in specialty occupations. The H-1B visa category has the following key requirements:

Applicant must have theoretical and practical application of a highly specialized body of knowledge and must have a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree or its equivalent in a specialized field. The company is the petitioner

of the H-1B and the international is the beneficiary. The company should consult their HR and legal counsel when completing these petitions.

The employer makes an H-1B visa petition to the Department of Labor and USCIS. An employer may petition for H-1B status for a maximum of 3 years at a time. An individual can hold H-1B status for up to a maximum of six years. It is advised to plan petition applications early as timing of filing is critical due to H-1B visa limits.

# WORK IN THE U.S. AFTER GRADUATION

## **O-1 Visa: Individuals with Extraordinary Ability to Achievement**

The O-1 nonimmigrant visa is for the individual who possesses extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics, among other fields, and are recognized nationally or internationally for those achievements. An O-1 petition has an initial period of stay of up to 3 years. Subsequent extensions may last for no more than one year at a time. There is no limit to the number of extensions.

## **Nonimmigrant NAFTA Professional (TN) Visa**

The TN visa allows citizens of Canada and Mexico, as NAFTA professionals, to work in the U.S. in a prearranged business activity for a U.S. or foreign employer. Permanent residents, including Canadian permanent residents, are not able to apply to work as a NAFTA professional. Both Canadian and Mexican citizens can be admitted to the United States in TN status in increments of up to three years. There is no cumulative time limit on TN status. Status is renewable indefinitely, provided the stay remains temporary in nature.

## **E-3 Certain Specialty Occupation**

**Professionals from Australia** The E-3 classification applies only to nationals of Australia. The specialty occupation requires theoretical and practical application of a body of knowledge in professional fields and at least the attainment of a bachelor's degree, or its equivalent, as a minimum, for entry into the occupation in the U. S. There is no cumulative time limit on E-3. It is renewable every two years indefinitely, provided the stay remains temporary in nature.

## **Intra-Company Transfer (L) Visa**

L Intra-company Transferees who, within the three preceding years, have been employed abroad continuously for one year, and who will be employed by a branch, parent, affiliate, or subsidiary of that same employer in the U.S. in a managerial, executive, or specialized knowledge capacity may be eligible for an L Visa.

USCIS website: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-nonimmigrant-workers>

## PERMANENT RESIDENCY

Lawful permanent residency is a status granted by the U.S. government to citizens of other countries. One option to obtain PR is through an “employer-based petition”. For example, the employer may document the need for a person’s occupational skills, or the individual must prove international recognition in his or her field. While an employer may sponsor an individual, USCIS makes the final decision. Make no promise or guarantee to the employee.

**USCIS website:** <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers>

## LEGAL SUPPORT

### **Find an immigration attorney**

OISS can only provide general information on visa categories beyond F and J. International students and U.S. employers need to talk to an immigration attorney regarding specific cases.

American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Offers a “find a lawyer” option. <http://www.aila.org/>

# US WORK AUTHORIZATION CHART

	Process	Employer Requirements	Timing	Cost
<b>Curriculum Practical Training (CPT)</b> <b>F-1 Visa Holders</b>	<p>CPT can be done prior to completion of study. Student applies for approval from their host institution. Students can request to work:</p> <p><b>Part time</b> - maximum of 20 hours/ week while school is in session (there may be exceptions)</p> <p><b>Full time</b> - when school is not in session (21 hours or more/week)</p>	<p>Provide Offer Letter and/or other job specifications</p>	<p>Approval takes 3-10 business days</p>	<p>No cost to employer or student</p>
<b>Optional Practical Training (OPT)</b> <b>F-1 visa holders</b>	<p>Can be authorized for full-time employment after completion of studies (definition of completion varies by degree level)</p> <p>Student files OPT application with their host institution</p> <p>Approval is granted by the U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)</p> <p>Student must obtain Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) prior to starting work</p>	<p>None</p> <p>Student must present EAD card to employer on the first day of work as proof of authorization.</p>	<p>Approval takes 2-3 months – students can apply 90 days in advance of their program completion.</p>	<p>No cost to employer</p> <p>\$410 paid by student</p>
<b>H-1B Visas</b>	<p>H-1B temporary worker non-immigrant status is designated for individuals coming temporarily to the U.S. to perform services in a specialty occupation.</p> <p>The position must be a specialty occupation as defined as “an occupation that requires (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and (B) attainment of a bachelor’s or higher degree in the specific specialty as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.”</p> <p>INA214(i); 8USC 1184(i).</p>	<p>Sponsorship is required for H-1B visa filing.</p> <p>Link to USCIS site which explains the employer requirement and steps needed to file H-1B petition: <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-1b-specialty-occupations-dod-cooperative-research-and-development-project-workers-and-fashion-models">https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-1b-specialty-occupations-dod-cooperative-research-and-development-project-workers-and-fashion-models</a></p>	<p>Varies depending on employer. The rules allow H-1B petition to be filed 6 months in advance of H-1B start date.</p>	<p>Filing fees for H-1B petition can be found at: <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/forms/h-and-l-filing-fees-form-i-129-petition-nonimmigrant-worker">https://www.uscis.gov/forms/h-and-l-filing-fees-form-i-129-petition-nonimmigrant-worker</a></p>
<b>Academic Training (AT)</b> <b>J-1 Visa Holder</b>	<p>AT can be done Before and After completion of study</p> <p>Student applies for approval from their host institution</p> <p>Students are eligible to work anywhere from 18 to 36 months depending on length of study.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Approval takes 3-10 business days</p>	<p>No cost to employer</p>



# HOW TO ANSWER “ARE YOU AUTHORIZED TO WORK IN THE U.S.?”

## Discussing Your Immigration Status

Although it is illegal for a potential employer to ask you your race, nationality, or immigration status, they can, ask you if you are authorized to work in the U.S. You are not required to offer the information if not asked about your employment eligibility, but it is very important that you are able to explain it if necessary.

Not all employers are familiar with the work authorization associated with various immigration categories, so the more knowledgeable you are about the employment options available to you; the more confident you will feel about the discussion.

The Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) can help you to understand your work authorization options.

**If a company says they don't hire international students, it may still be okay to apply.** While some employers cannot hire international students for certain reasons (U.S. governmental contracts) for example, when employers say they don't hire international students it may mean they haven't hired any yet. In order to convince prospective employers, it is your responsibility to educate them about the process of hiring an international student. Keep in mind that they still may not hire you. It is recommended that you first target organizations with a history of sponsoring individuals for H-1B (temporary worker) visas.<sup>1</sup>

**Be knowledgeable about your work authorization options:** You need to know the benefits and restrictions of your particular immigration status and be able to discuss

comfortably (depending on your visa type) Academic, Curricular, and Optional Practical Training (AT, CPT, OPT) and H1-B visas, among other possible visa types. The more knowledgeable you are about your employment options, the more confident you will feel and appear during the discussion with your prospective employer. You should also practice responses to potential questions such as “Are you authorized to work in the US?”

**Know the appropriate time to reveal that you are an international student:** If your interviewer asks about your visa and work eligibility, answer directly and honestly. If your interview is coming to a close and the visa issue has not been mentioned yet, it is a good idea for you to bring it up casually. You can say: “I would like to mention that I am on a student visa and will need to briefly discuss my legal employment options with you if I'm hired. My international student advisor has explained the procedures that exist for my lawful employment.” By bringing up the topic yourself, you are showing the employer that you are motivated to get the job and that you are ready to assist them with the procedure.

**When interviewing you should emphasize the positive:** It is an advantage for employers to have a diverse group of employees. Especially as more companies are going global, it is an advantage to many employers to have a bilingual employee and/or an employee familiar with work abroad. That fact that you have lived and studied abroad shows your confidence and resourcefulness. Convey to the interviewer challenges you have faced and overcome in this process. Be prepared to explain to your potential employer how hiring you offers more advantages than disadvantages.

1. [www.http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/](http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/)

# HOW TO ANSWER “ARE YOU AUTHORIZED TO WORK IN THE U.S.?”

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I answer when I am asked by an employer if I can legally work in the U.S.?

#### (F-1 Student)

Start by explaining that you are legally able to apply for your own work authorization through your university while you are on an F-1 visa at no cost to them (using either Curricular or Optional Practical Training). Utilizing this practical training may allow you to work anywhere from 12 to 29 months (or more if you combine CPT and OPT together), depending on your major.

#### (J-1 Student/Scholar)

Same as the F-1 student though the time you have available may differ and, in certain cases, you must get permission from your sponsor to work. If you are not sure, please check with the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS).

Please refer to the <sup>1</sup>[OISS website](#) for more information under <sup>2</sup>“[Employment](#)”. You can also share with the employer -“my work authorization can be renewed for another three to six years with an H-1B temporary worker visa.”

Avoid saying the word “sponsor” when talking about the H-1B application process, instead use “petition”.<sup>1</sup> Explain to the employer that they “petition” for the visa and you are the beneficiary.

**Note:** An H-1B petition *does not* require an employer to test the labor market, meaning they do not have to prove there are no qualified U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents available for the position. It may also be useful to explain that you do not need a “Green Card” in order to work in the U.S. and that an H-1B visa is different from this.

### Will you now or in the future require sponsorship for employment (E.g. H-1B visa)?

Yes! Many employers will ask this because they need to know whether a petition for H-1B is needed. Following the question above, explain that you will require an H-1B petition to work for up to six years after you have exhausted your F or J visa options. The legal fee for applying can cost several thousand dollars with additional filing fees paid to the U.S. government.

You can also share with the employers the **“Employers Guide to Hiring International Students”** section of this PDF.

1. [www.http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/](http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/)

2. <http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/students/employ/>

# CHALLENGES INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS MAY ENCOUNTER

No job search goes exactly as you plan. Successful searches require preparation for the cultural expectations of U.S. employers as well as addressing potential concerns.

**Language:** Finding the right words to express yourself professionally in a language that is not your first can be difficult. Take advantage of all your campus resources (Career Services Network, English Language Center, OISS programs) to practice your English and the vocabulary you need to make a positive impression on an employer in the U.S.

**Hiring Complexities:** When your student work eligibility expires, in order to continue working in the U.S., your employer will be required to sponsor you for a 'change of status' to a work visa. The transition to another visa status requires careful planning well in advance of the expiration of your current immigration status. Not all employers have their own immigration department, therefore it is important that you are aware of the time it will take to change your status and be proactive in making sure your employer is aware. Because of this, as well as the costs involved in changing an employee's immigration status, some employers hesitate to hire international students. This is why you must be prepared to demonstrate what you can bring to the organization as well as the benefits of hiring a non-U.S. citizen.

**Commitment:** Some employers fear international employees will return to their home country soon after the employer has invested time, money, training resources, and possibly sponsoring him/her for a work visa. It is important to show the employer your loyalty to the company and how you are an asset to the company's overseas operations.

**Animosity:** Some Americans feel that by hiring an international student employers are taking jobs away from U.S. citizens. Due to the current economy, this sentiment may be more pronounced right now. You should be able to demonstrate how your skills and knowledge will be an asset to the company. Also, research diversity and its benefits in the workplace. If you are pursuing a degree in any of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields, you may also want to arm yourself with statistics that show international students are the majority of graduates in many of these fields.

**Location:** International students often limit their job search to the east or west coasts (California, Seattle, Boston, New York, Washington D.C., etc.). The competition for these jobs thus becomes very intense. Be open to all locations, especially Southeast Michigan. Michigan is the first state to create a program specifically to recruit international students to live and work in the Detroit area. **The Global Talent Retention Initiative of Southeast Michigan (GTRI)** is being developed as a resource to connect employers in the Detroit area with international students seeking internships and full time employment during their practical training period.



## Global Talent Retention Initiative of Southeast Michigan

To get the latest information on SE Michigan Employment opportunities for international students, "LIKE" us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/MiGTRI](http://www.facebook.com/MiGTRI)

*Prepared by the GTRI, adapted for Michigan State University by the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS)*

# WORKING VISA REALITIES IN THE U.S

## Limited visa options and industries

The H-1B temporary working visa is the most commonly used visa for U.S employers to hire international employees. However, the application is extremely competitive, has many limitations, and is arguably based on luck.

### How many spots are available for H1B visa?

20,000 for advanced degree (master's or higher) and 65,000 for general degree.

### What is the process of applying for H1B?

1. Find an employer who is willing to file a petition on your behalf to the U.S government.
2. Mail application package to U.S government.
3. USCIS used a *computer-generated random selection process*, or lottery, to select enough petitions to meet the 65,000 general-category cap and the 20,000 cap under the advanced degree exemption.

### How many people applied for H1B visa in the past three years?

Fiscal Year 2017: Same 85,000 visas available and 236,000 H-1B petitions.

<https://www.uscis.gov/news/alerts/uscis-completes-h-1b-cap-random-selection-process-fy-2017>

Fiscal Year 2016: Same 85,000 visas available and 233,000 H-1B petitions.

<https://www.uscis.gov/news/alerts/uscis-completes-h-1b-cap-random-selection-process-fy-2016>

Fiscal Year 2015: 85,000 visas in total and 172,500 H-1B petitions.

Source: <https://www.uscis.gov/news/uscis-reaches-fy-2015-h-1b-cap-0>

SOURCE: USCIS website: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-nonimmigrant-workers>

## Most H1B visa holders are in STEM (Science, Technologies, Engineering & Mathematics) fields

### [2017 H1B Visa Report: Top H1B Visa NAICS Industry](#)

1 - 50 | [51 - 100](#) | [101 - 150](#) | [151 - 200](#) | [search all](#)

Other Reports: [All](#) | [Occupation](#) | [Visa Status](#) | [Job Title](#) | [Industry](#) | [Work City](#) | [Work State](#)

Rank	NAICS Industry	Number of LCA <sup>2</sup>	Average Salary
1	<a href="#">Computer Systems Design and Related Services</a>	336,513	\$78,876
2	<a href="#">Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services</a>	53,647	\$94,320
3	<a href="#">Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools</a>	27,641	\$74,997
4	<a href="#">Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services</a>	17,682	\$76,937
5	<a href="#">Software Publishers</a>	12,993	\$114,081
6	<a href="#">Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services</a>	12,640	\$83,704
7	<a href="#">Scientific Research and Development Services</a>	9,912	\$86,594
8	<a href="#">Semiconductor and Other Electronic Component Manufacturing</a>	8,370	\$106,665
9	<a href="#">General Medical and Surgical Hospitals</a>	8,102	\$128,365
10	<a href="#">Securities and Commodity Contracts Intermediation and Brokerage</a>	7,861	\$118,711
11	<a href="#">Electronic Shopping and Mail-Order Houses</a>	5,898	\$119,604
12	<a href="#">Other Financial Investment Activities</a>	5,534	\$108,283

SOURCE: <http://www.myvisajobs.com/Reports/2017-H1B-Visa-Category.aspx?T=IN>

# JOB SEARCHING STRATEGIES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Due to the language, cultural and immigration challenges you may encounter while looking for a job in the U.S, the strategies below are highly recommended by your fellow peer international students and alumni to help you get prepared!

- **Resources**

<sup>1</sup>MSU's [Career Services Network](#) has a webpage with dozens of tips and resources just for international students – it's a great place to start.

- **Start early**

Your career development begins the moment you join MSU. MSU Career Services is here to help you explore how your interests, values, skills and personality fit together to give shape to your future. If you already know what you want to do, we can you prepare for your career path and search for great internships! Begin by <sup>4</sup>creating your <sup>2</sup>[Handshake](#) account, and connecting with a <sup>3</sup>[career advisor](#) with expertise in your area of interest.

- **Use Handshake**

Handshake is MSU's system for career advising, career events, and thousands of internships and jobs, just for Spartan students.

- **Work on campus first**

You'll quickly discover that MSU has a very large campus. Working in the dining hall near your room will help you manage your time and travel around campus. This early work experience is important in helping you to obtain an internship in your desired career field. MSU hires 17,000+ students to work on campus each year, so <sup>4</sup>[opportunities are plentiful](#).

- **Use work authorization options from your student visa**

Take advantage of CPT and OPT, and make sure that you understand your work authorization options. See Section 1 of this guide to start!

1. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/student-resources/resources-for-international-students.html>

2. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/services-locations/handshake/handshake-student-info.html>

3. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/services-locations/where-we-are.html>

4. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/jobs-internships/part-time-jobs/part-time-jobs.html>

# JOB SEARCHING STRATEGIES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CONTINUED

- **Volunteer, study away and study abroad to gain experience**

MSU's<sup>1</sup>Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement offers opportunities for students to get involved in service activities on campus and in the local community – a great way to develop your resume. Study away opportunities are class or internships held in another part of the U.S., usually for credit – the<sup>2</sup>College of Social Science, <sup>3</sup>James Madison College, the<sup>4</sup>College of Arts and Letters, all offer these programs. You do not need to be a student in those colleges to participate in their study away programs. Last, study abroad through MSU! MSU's Office of Education Abroad offers<sup>5</sup>275+ education abroad opportunities around the world.

- **Internships are the key to a full-time job**

Internships are challenging work opportunities related to your major and intended career that help you to reflect and integrate your college learning in the professional world. International students use their Curricular Practical Training (CPT) work authorization option in these roles. These experiences are important in helping you be a strong candidate for jobs after graduation.

- **Understand immigration policies and be able to explain to potential employers**

Be familiar and up-to-date on U.S. visa regulations is important. Section 1, page 10 of this document has language you may use when discussing immigration policy with potential employers.

- **Have a back-up plan - dual country job searching**

Whether you wish to work in the U.S. after graduation, work in another country, or return home, it's important for international students to spend time exploring work options in your home country. Connect with MSU alumni in your home country through the <sup>6</sup>MSU Alumni Association, join<sup>7</sup>student groups to meet people from your home country or that share your interests.

1. <https://servicelearning.msu.edu/>

2. <http://www.socialscience.msu.edu/students/experiential-learning/study-away/>

3. <https://jmc.msu.edu/current-students/msu-study-away-internships.php>

4. <http://www.cal.msu.edu/currentstudents/studyabroad/study-away-programs>

5. <http://educationabroad.isp.msu.edu/students/getting-started/compare-programs/>

6. <https://alumni.msu.edu/get-together/alumni-clubs/>

7. <http://studentlife.msu.edu/student-organizations-activities>

## SECTION 2

# JOB SEARCHING BASICS IN THE U.S.

Whether you have been in the U.S. for one year or many, life as a student is different from that of a full-time employee (often referred to as “the real world”<sup>1</sup> by Americans). One of the most important skills to use in your first few months at work is observation. The workplace has its own culture, which can vary from company to company even in the same field.

**Resume and Interview Tips**  
**Elevator Speech**  
**Networking Tips**  
**Informational Interview**  
**Managing your Online Identity**  
**Presentation Tips**

# RESUME AND INTERVIEW GUIDE

Just as there are cultural differences in education systems and social life, there are cultural differences in what an employer expects during the interview process. This guide is designed to help international students in the U.S. understand what these cultural differences may be, help them create a U.S. appropriate resume, and prepare for a successful interview process.

## Resume

A resume for a U.S. employer is a concise, attractive marketing tool that summarizes job skills, accomplishments, and academic background relevant to your employment objective. It is NOT a detailed chronological list of academic and formal work experience.

### You SHOULD Include

- Full Name (*given name, family name*)
- Contact Information in the U.S.
- Career Objective (*optional*)
- Summary of Qualifications (*optional*)
- Education (*highest degree first*)
- Relevant Experience (*most recent first*)
- Leadership Experience (*optional*)
- Honors & Awards (*optional*)
- Languages (*other than English*)

### You SHOULD NOT Include

- TOEFL Score
- Photograph
- Immigration Status
- Age
- Hometown/Home Country
- Marital Status
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion
- Personal Interests or Hobbies

**Resume guides and samples: [careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/resources](http://careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/resources)**

## Interviewing

The most difficult thing for many international students during the interview process is selling themselves. The U.S. is a highly individualistic, direct culture where employers expect you to show confidence in yourself and enthusiasm for the job. To do this, you must openly discuss your goals and accomplishments in order to convince them you are the best candidate for the job. Many international students feel boastful and disrespectful when trying to discuss their qualifications in such an individualistic manner, but this is one of those situations where it is important that you practice expressing yourself confidently without sounding arrogant. Learning to find the appropriate language is often difficult, so it is very important that you take advantage of the programs your career center provides, such as practice interviews.

### You SHOULD

- Be on time
- Maintain eye contact
- Anticipate questions regarding competency and experience
- Openly discuss your accomplishments
- Be direct and give specific examples that demonstrate your experience
- Be prepared to discuss your strengths and weaknesses
- Research the organization
- Follow-up your interview with a thank you note
- Interview guide and sample questions:

### You SHOULD NOT

- Be late
- Disclose age, race, marital status (*it is illegal for them to ask you such personal questions*)
- Answer questions indirectly
- Avoid responding to questions that require you to talk about your accomplishments and personal career goals
- Treat anyone you meet differently based on education, job title, sex, age, etc. (*politeness and respect are shown to all employees a candidate meets, whether a receptionist or CEO*)



# THE ELEVATOR SPEECH

An elevator speech is a 30 to 60-second speech (think about it being a personal commercial!) that is a concise, well-practiced marketing message about your professional self. Whether you're on the phone, in person at a networking event, or informally chatting with a friend or relative, you will have a "ready-made" answer to the questions "tell me about yourself?" or "what are you hoping to do when you graduate?"

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## Clarify Your Job Target

Know what type of experience or position you are looking for and tailor your pitch to be relevant to your goal.

## Put it on Paper

Write down everything you'd want a potential employer to know about your skills, accomplishments and experiences.

## Format it, Practice it!

While there are a few skills and experiences to highlight in your pitch, work up ways to customize it for particular situations. Be sure to practice and get feedback from others.

## Say it With Confidence

Remember to maintain eye contact and be calm. Avoid sounding overly rehearsed.



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## Common Mistakes

Lack of confidence in what you have to offer.

*"I don't have a lot of experience yet."* Instead, say: *"I'm excited to learn x and y."*

Lack of focus or goals.

*"I have a lot of interests and don't want to limit myself."* Instead focus on transferable skills.

Inability to articulate the skills gained from one's academic major.

*"I know my major has nothing to do with my interest in starting my own business, but..."*

SOURCE: <http://career.sa.ucsb.edu/students/job-search/creating-elevator-pitch-two-minutes-or-less>

# NETWORKING TIPS

## Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

Challenge yourself to attend networking and social events to talk with people. If English is not your first language make the effort to interact with English speakers and use your 'Elevator Speech'! Attend OISS Coffee Hours--held each Friday at 4pm in the International Center

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## Understand Cultural Differences

Take the time to understand and address different business cultures and how to network. When networking at events and social gatherings, be aware of language cues and general etiquette. For example, in U.S business culture, it is appropriate to speak about yourself and your qualifications.

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## Be Proactive Online

When searching for opportunities, use credible resources for employment information, industry trends, and business culture in the country you are seeking employment. Connect with industry professionals using social media: Use Twitter and LinkedIn to also participate on news articles and posts. Don't forget to be cautious of language choice when posting or writing to professionals.

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## Be an Active Listener

It's important to be an active listener when networking. When seeking information about a certain job, career, or industry, it is important to show sincerity and interest. Take brief notes on the key points. Remember to ask for business cards or contact information and be sure to follow-up afterwards through a thank you email, or connection on social media. *Tip: Write what you talked about and when/where you met on the back of their business card.*

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## Don't be Discouraged

Building your network takes a lot of time and energy. Not everyone you reach out to will necessarily respond to you. Don't take it personally, and don't give up! Move on to the next person. More often than not, people are more than willing to speak to students.

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# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

## What is Informational Interviewing?

Informational Interviewing entails finding individuals in your field of interest, and asking them questions regarding the field that will eventually help you in determining whether or not that a particular field of work is a good “fit” for you. At the same time, you begin a new relationship with someone who can begin to mentor and advise you along your chosen path.



## Objectives of Informational Interviews

### To Learn More

If you hope to find what a specific career path has to offer, what the positives and negatives are within an organization’s culture, or which academic major will prepare you best for a selected career path; why not ask the people who already working within that field?

### To Build Relationships

USA Today posted the question, “*How did you find your present position (jobs)?*” Almost 70 % of those surveyed claimed that they were able to obtain their position because someone they knew. In other words, most of us attribute our career success to personal relationships. The earlier you start building relationships with people in your field of interest, the stronger they will be. This can significantly improve your professional network you’ll use when you actually begin your job hunt.



## Where Do I Start?

Informational Interviewing is a networking process. On the following page is a guideline for making contacts and gathering informations from them. As you go through the process focus on obtaining information relevant to your career objectives while building lasting relationships. The sooner you begin, the more prepared you will be to make career decisions pertaining to internships and full time positions. Turn the page to get started!



# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW PROCESS

## 1 Network Through Existing Connections

You will be amazed at how many contacts you may be able to make through existing relationships. Ask, “Who do you know that...” and be sure to obtain contact information. Also, let your friend or family member know that your intent is to contact this person to learn more about their career field. MSU’s Alumni Association, your professors and advisors, and LinkedIn are also useful in helping you identify people you may wish to meet.

## 2 Schedule Meeting

Call or e-mail the new contact and let them know that:

- You are a MSU student studying (your academic field)
- Your friend suggested that you contact them for career advise
- You can invite them to coffee
- Ask if they have 30 minutes available to answer questions you have about the field in which they work (face-to-face appointments are best, but a phone/email conversation is fine)

## 3 Write out Your Schedule

Remember, you are the interviewer so be prepared. Make a list of questions that you have. Be sure to show a substantial interest in the career field and the organization. For example, you may want to ask:

- What has been your career path?
- Can you describe a typical work day?
- What do you like best/least about your job/company?
- Sample questions can be found on the Career Services Network

## 4 Final Three Questions

Once you are ready to end the discussion (keep an eye on the clock, you only asked for 30 minutes!), ask three final questions:

- Would you please look at my resume and give me feedback?
- Who else do you know that might give me further insight into this field, and can I contact them?
- Would you mind if I kept in touch with you?

## 5 Follow-Up

Make sure to show your appreciations for their time. Send a thank you note or e-mail and let them know what you learned. As you continue to study the field, approach your new contact with questions that come up, and as you strengthen the relationship ask if they know of any opportunities to gain experience in the field.

1. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/exploring-options/information-interviews-and-job-shadowing/sample-questions.html>

2. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/thank-you-letters/index.html>

# MANAGING YOUR DIGITAL IDENTITY

Your online identity or brand is defined by any and all online information that exists about you, whether you created it or not. Social networking sites are part of your public image. The material you post and the things you write will influence an employer or graduate schools' impression of you, for better or for worse. Employers, graduate schools, and other programs use social media sites and information in their recruitment and selection processes. Know what is out there with your name on it. If you can Google it, so can someone else.

## Check Your Current Online Identity

**Review your public email address(es):** Is each address professional?

**Google yourself:** Are you comfortable with an employer or graduate school seeing what you found?

**For each social networking site (Facebook, Twitter, etc):** Would you be comfortable if someone else were to see your profile, photos, groups and comments? Are you tagged in any photos online?

**If you've posted your resume online:** Are you comfortable with the privacy policy where your resume is posted? You may want to omit your street address and phone number for safety and privacy.

**If you have your own website or blog:** Are you comfortable with an employer or graduate school seeing what you've written, posted and/or compiled?

## Clean Up Your Online Identity

The next step is to target potential problems you've identified and clean them up.

Identify the easier areas to address first, like your own Facebook profile and blog, then tackle the tougher ones like contacting friends regarding the embarrassing photos in which you are tagged.

There are some pieces that are a part of the public record and can't be removed, like police logs and newspaper articles.

If there is information on the web that you would rather employers or schools not see, you must be particularly diligent in building your brand on high traffic sites so that less flattering information will appear lower on a Google search.

## Build Your Online Identity or Brand

Now that you know what's out there, and have worked to clean up your image, you are ready to begin proactively building your brand with intentionality.

The simplest step you can take to guarantee that the first Google link with your name on it is professional is to create a LinkedIn profile.

[LinkedIn](#) is a great way to professionally display your skills, accomplishments and your goals while building meaningful relationships.

Creating a professional online presence can help you find a job!

1. [www.http://linkedin.com/](http://linkedin.com/)

SOURCE: <https://www.pomona.edu/administration/career-development/how-to/networking/managing-your-online-identity>

# US WORK AUTHORIZATION CHART

	Process	Employer Requirements	Timing	Cost
<b>Curriculum Practical Training (CPT) F-1 Visa Holders</b>	<p>CPT can be done prior to completion of study. Student applies for approval from their host institution. Students can request to work:</p> <p><b>Part time</b> - maximum of 20 hours/ week while school is in session (there may be exceptions)</p> <p><b>Full time</b> - when school is not in session (21 hours or more/week)</p>	Provide Offer Letter and/or other job specifications	Approval takes 3-10 business days	No cost to employer or student
<b>Optional Practical Training (OPT) F-1 visa holders</b>	<p>Can be authorized for full-time employment after completion of studies (definition of completion varies by degree level)</p> <p>Student files OPT application with their host institution</p> <p>Approval is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)</p> <p>Student must obtain Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) prior to starting work</p>	<p>None</p> <p>Student must present EAD card to employer on the first day of work as proof of authorization.</p>	Approval takes 2-3 months – students can apply 90 days in advance of their program completion.	<p>No cost to employer</p> <p>\$380 paid by student</p>
<b>H-1B Visas</b>	<p>Work visa available to foreign nationals who:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have at least a U.S Bachelor's degree or foreign equivalent</li> <li>2. Will be working in a job that requires at least a degree</li> </ol> <p>There is no need to advertise the position and no need to determine if U.S workers are available to fill the position</p>	<p>Submit visa petition to USCIS.</p> <p>Employer must post notice for 10 days at the worksite stating they are hiring an H1-B worker, providing information about the position</p>	On average 5-6 months. Employer can request expedited processing for an additional \$1,225 and can take up to 15 days to approve.	<p>Ranges from \$2000-\$3500 and includes: Base Filing: \$325 ACWIA Fee \$750 for employer with 1-25 full time employees, \$1500 for 26 or more full time employees</p> <p>Fraud Prevention and Detection fee: \$500</p> <p>Public Law 111 Fee: \$2000 - if more than 50 employees</p> <p>Attorney Fees if applicable</p>
<b>Academic Training (AT) J-1 Visa Holder</b>	<p>AT can be done Before and After completion of study</p> <p>Student applies for approval from their host institution</p> <p>Students are eligible to work anywhere from 18 to 36 months depending on length of study.</p>	None	Approval takes 3-10 business days	No cost to employer

For more details about U.S. Work Authorization Options for International Students, please refer to the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) website at Michigan State University: [www.oiss.msu.edu/students/employ](http://www.oiss.msu.edu/students/employ) under Related Links

## SECTION 3

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES AT MSU

Job searching in the U.S as international students can be overwhelming. But you are not alone. We have Career Advisors, Immigration Advisors and all the resources available right here on campus to help you. Find out where to find support and who can help you along the way.

**How to prepare for a Career Advising appointment**  
**MSU Career Services Network**  
**Office for International Students and Scholars**  
**Resources and materials**

# PREPARE FOR A CAREER ADVISING APPOINTMENT

## Learn about the MSU Career Services Network

With support all across campus, you can<sup>1</sup> [find the career advisor that is right for you](#) and your interests. Career Services has advisors in every college on campus.

## What do Career Advisors do?

Career advisors are specialists that help you explore your interests and the resources on campus, prepare for internships, interviews, and the job search process by helping with resume and cover letter creation, practice interviews, and search strategies. They help connect you with organizations and opportunities and for life after MSU. Typical career advising topics include:

- Major & Career Exploration ([what can I do with my major?](#))
- Getting Involved in Campus Activities
- Resume & Cover Letter Writing
- Job and Internship Search Strategies
- Interview Preparation and Practice Interviews
- Graduate School Options and Application Preparation
- Professional Portfolio Development
- Job Offer Evaluation & Decision-Making
- Navigating<sup>3</sup> [Handshake](#) and other<sup>4</sup> [online tools](#)
- Professional Networking and Using<sup>5</sup> [LinkedIn](#)
- Career Event/Career Fair Preparation
- Other Career-Related Topics

1. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/services-locations/where-we-are.html>

2. <http://whatcanidowiththismajor.com/info.html>

3. <http://careernetwork.msu.edu/services-locations/handshake/>

4. <https://msucareertools.campuscareerinnovations.com/>

5. <https://www.linkedin.com/>



# PREPARE FOR A CAREER ADVISING APPOINTMENT

## **Make an appointment with a Career Advisor through Handshake.**

Create your Handshake account by visiting [careernetwork.msu.edu](https://careernetwork.msu.edu). Handshake is MSU's system for career advising, career events, and thousands of jobs and internships, just for MSU students.

To make an appointment, log into Handshake, complete your profile, and then click on "Career Center" and then "Appointments." Select the type of appointment that you would like, and then select an appointment with the staff member from your college or one that sees "All Majors."

## **What should I bring to my career advising appointment?**

What you bring depends on what you hope to gain from your appointment!

Are you looking for a job on campus? Would you like to learn more about the kinds of careers available with your major? Do you need your resume reviewed? Do you need help finding an internship? If you have documents you would like reviewed, bring along paper copies. If you have a specific job you'd like to apply to, bring a print out of the job description, or write down the link. You could also bring a list of questions you have or goals you hope to achieve during your appointment.

## **When should I see my Career Advisor?**

At least once a year, and at key times when you need support in your career development. Whether it be thinking about how adding a minor or major might change your career trajectory, wondering how to incorporate new experiences on to your resume or how to talk about them in interviews, preparing for career fairs, or where to find the kind of internships that will prepare you for life after MSU.

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CAREER RESOURCES

## International Student Employment Guide

This is the guide you are looking at right now! This guide includes all the basics for international students, employers and Career Advisors about international students employment.

## Career Path for International Students Video

Refer to *Career Path for International Students* video found on The Office for International Students and Scholars' YouTube page. It is a great way to get you started! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTwFHzagRio&t=63s>

## Career Handbook

MSU's Career Services Network has developed award-winning career guides to help students—from freshmen to seniors—prepare for life after college. Click the links below to see guides for the most popular topics, or go to <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/>

## BUS102: International Student Career Certificate

BUS 102 is a one credit free tuition class that trains international students on job searching skills, and practice with a guaranteed paid 10 hours/week on-campus job. The class is in Spring semester and is 10 weeks long. The enrollment is application based, which will be posted on HandShake in the middle of the Fall semester.

## OTHER RESOURCES

### MyVisaJobs

Reports for H1B Visas and  
Visa Sponsor Profiles  
<http://www.myvisajobs.com/>

### GoinGlobal

Provides information on employers who have petitioned for H-1B visas as well as cultural and networking information.  
<http://www.goinglobal.com/>

### Global Talent Retention Initiative of Michigan

Lists employers interested in hiring international students and posts available positions and provides information to employers as well. <http://www.migtri.org/>

### MSU Career Services Network International Students webpage

Has all the information international students need to get started on their career development - from communication tips, programs, internships and jobs just for them.  
<https://careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/student-resources/resources-for-international-students.html>

### American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)

Offers a "find a lawyer" option.  
<http://www.aila.org/>

### United States Citizenship & Immigration Service (USCIS)

Check out the "Services and Benefits" Section  
<http://www.uscis.gov>

### InternationalStudent.com

Check out the "Job Search" section.  
<http://www.internationalstudent.com>

Note: OISS does not specifically endorse the resources listed above, but rather provides them for educational purposes.

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CAREER RESOURCES

## MSU Career Services

The Career Services Network (CSN) offers resources and programs to build your resume writing and interviewing skills, one-on-one career advising, career workshops and fairs, and connections to jobs and internships.

Address: 556 E. Circle Drive, room 113, MSU Student Services Building, East Lansing MI 48824

Phone: (517) 355-9510

Email: [CareerServices@csp.msu.edu](mailto:CareerServices@csp.msu.edu)

Website: <http://careernetwork.msu.edu/>

Mon-Fri: 8:00am - 5:00pm

## Office for International Students & Scholars (OISS)

OISS can explain your U.S. work authorization options, assist you with the proper documentation, and give you tips on how to talk to employers about your immigration status.

Address: 427 Shaw Lane, Room 105, International Center, East Lansing MI 48824

Phone (517) 353- 1720

Email: [oiss@msu.edu](mailto:oiss@msu.edu)

Website: <https://www.oiss.msu.edu>

Drop In Hours: Monday-Friday, 1-3pm

SECTION 4

# TRANSITIONING TO THE U.S. WORKPLACE

General guidelines and tips

# GENERAL GUIDELINES AND TIPS

- **Build a strong first impression.** be punctual in your arrival to work, return from lunch break promptly, be on time for appointments, dress neatly and appropriately (find out if there is a dress code before your first day) don't make lengthy, numerous or unnecessary personal calls, and don't be the first to leave at the end of the day.
- **Utilize company resources, such as the employee handbook, website or training workshops offered by the company ("in-house").** The human resources office can be a good source of information on company policy as well as the state and federal laws that impact your status as an employee. These resources will help you learn about the company's culture.
- **Actively participate in staff meetings.** Like the U.S. classroom, verbal input is often desired whether it is offering a new idea or reinforcing a suggestion made by another.
- **Volunteer to serve on committees.** This is a good way to learn about your colleagues in a different setting. Also, some companies encourage employees to participate in community work outside the office setting. Find out if your company has a favorite charity that it supports. Finally, the company may have sports teams it sponsors for recreation, such as softball. Being part of a team with colleagues in a casual pastime is another ideal way to interact.
- **Be prepared for diverse workforces.** (Approximately 50% of U.S. workers are women.) You will have colleagues from many racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. The U.S. workplace is very sensitive to sexual harassment and other inappropriate behavior. Although you may not intend a comment to be inappropriate, a colleague may interpret it as such. There can be serious repercussions to an employee's job and future with the company, depending on the particular situation. Definitions of unacceptable behavior may vary from company to company.
- **Do not gossip about your own or others' personal lives.** Office "grapevines"<sup>1</sup> tend to be faster than email. Something you may have told someone in confidence could become information shared by many. Be discreet as to how much personal information you reveal. For example, if you need to take a day off to help a sick parent, you may not wish to go into the details of their condition, depending on the situation.
- **Schedule your time off well in advance.** Though you may be ready for a vacation after your first week, it is likely you won't be eligible until several months - or a year later. Depending on the work environment and pace, it is advisable to request vacation days 2-4 weeks in advance, whenever possible.
- **Use office property in a responsible manner.** Make sure if you take materials home, they are used for office work at home - and returned to the office the next day.
- **Likewise, use office technology in a responsible manner.** Treat email as formal correspondence, with correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Do not "surf the web" for pleasure while at work - nor should you store documents of a personal nature on an office computer. Finally, do not load computer games onto an office machine.
- **Understand how Americans view their employer, for example, the days of working at one company lifelong have largely passed for the majority.** On average, Americans change jobs 4-6 times in a lifetime.

- **“Networking”<sup>3</sup> is a valuable tool for your professional development.** Volunteer work, professional association membership and conference participation may be ways to expand your connections within the company and the field.
- **Use your MSU connection! As an alumnus, you are able to access the resources of the Office of Career Development – whether you are in an active job hunt or are interested in updating your resume.** Also, remember to stay in touch with faculty and classmates, as they progress in their careers as well.
- **Be aware of American body language. In general, Americans value a lot of eye contact during a conversation.** It is routine to shake hands with someone upon introduction.
- **Treat staff at all levels as important.** In fact, you may find a secretary may greatly impact the quality of your work life. Also, when dealing with persons of high status, the secretary often serves as the “gatekeeper”<sup>4</sup> to access that person. Finally, in keeping with American views on personal mobility, it is not unusual for someone in a support staff position to later be promoted to a professional job.
- **It is important to learn colleagues’ names as soon as possible.** On the first day, take a notebook to jot down such information. It is routine in most companies to call the boss and colleagues by their first name. Normally, companies evaluate a new employee within six months of arrival. This is a way to gauge your strengths and weaknesses. If your company doesn’t offer this formally, you may wish to ask your supervisor for this opportunity. Many Americans value “constructive criticism.”<sup>5</sup>
- **Dating a colleague is not advisable.** Some companies have explicit policies against this. Think very hard before you pursue a social relationship with a co-worker, since if it ends in an unpleasant manner, you will still be interacting with that person professionally.

- **If you decide to change jobs, it is advisable to have a new one secured prior to resigning.** Depending on the company, 2-4 weeks advance “notice”<sup>6</sup> is expected before departing. You will need to consider your specific situation to determine whether or not to inform a current employer you are job hunting. If the company culture values loyalty or is highly competitive, you may wish to keep your search private for as long as possible.
- **Be sure to maintain copies of all important correspondence and documents you both receive and produce.** Start immediately to create a logical file system, so that you can easily access such items.
- **When working on a document on the computer, which is important or will be used long-term, be sure to back the item up on disk, in addition to saving it on the hard drive.**
- **Music in the office environment can be a routine – or controversial – issue.** If the workplace allows and/or encourages music, be sure to play any radio at a low volume, so you do not distract or offend your colleagues.
- **If you have a conflict with someone at the office, it is usually best to try to resolve it directly with that person.** If you are unable to do so, the next step would be to speak with your boss. If the situation still cannot be resolved at that level – or if it is an ongoing conflict with the boss – you may wish to use the assistance of the personnel office.

1. **“grapevine”** – is a term used to describe how information is transmitted from one person to another, often in the sense of rumors.
2. **“networking”** – is when people make alliances, often at the professional level, which can be ways to pass on information to each other, find out about recent developments, job openings, etc.
3. **“gatekeeper”** – is the person who controls the communication access for another person, often of higher status.
4. **“constructive criticism”** – is when feedback is given in a way that points out the problems, but also works with the individual to help them come up with ways to correct them.
5. **“notice”** – is when an individual informs a company that s/he is going to resign.

**Source: Office for International Students & Scholars, New York University**

## SECTION 5

# EMPLOYER GUIDE TO HIRING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**Benefits of Hiring International Talent**  
**U.S. Work Authorization Chart**  
**Employing an International Student Before Graduation**  
**Employing an International Student After Graduation**  
**Employment Options for Non-immigration Visas**  
**Permanent Residency**

# BENEFITS OF HIRING INTERNATIONAL TALENT

## 1 **Cross-cultural Competencies**

International students bring cross-cultural competencies and multiple language skills to your organization.

## 2 **Diversity**

Hiring an international student not only brings diversity but also introduces a new perspective for creativity & problem-solving.

## 3 **Adaptability**

Many international students demonstrate maturity, flexibility and dedication and can share business practices of other cultures and help your organization adapt to new challenges globally.

## 4 **Experiences**

The students' diversity of prior work experiences coupled with academic excellence provides innovative approaches to business.

## 5 **Characteristics**

Demonstrate outstanding characteristics that are appealing to top employers: knowledge of other cultures, multiple language capabilities (including English), and ability to contribute in a teamwork-centered environment.

## 6 **Skills**

Students also exhibit high quality skills such as leadership, independence, and ability to adapt to change.

### **Need more information?**

Contact the Global Talent Retention Initiative of Michigan (GTRI)

[www.migtri.org](http://www.migtri.org) | [info@migtri.org](mailto:info@migtri.org)

Ave. Ste 275 East Lansing, MI 48823 | (517) 999-3382

Majors eligible for the 24-month extension:

<https://www.ice.gov/sevis/practical-training>

Guide to Hiring International Students

<https://www.creighton.edu/careercenter/employers/recruitmentresources/guidetohiringinternationalstudents/>





# US WORK AUTHORIZATION CHART

	Process	Employer Requirements	Timing	Cost
<b>Curriculum Practical Training (CPT)</b> <b>F-1 Visa Holders</b>	<p>CPT can be done prior to completion of study. Student applies for approval from their host institution. Students can request to work:</p> <p><b>Part time</b> - maximum of 20 hours/ week while school is in session (there may be exceptions)</p> <p><b>Full time</b> - when school is not in session (21 hours or more/week)</p>	<p>Provide Offer Letter and/or other job specifications</p>	<p>Approval takes 3-10 business days</p>	<p>No cost to employer or student</p>
<b>Optional Practical Training (OPT)</b> <b>F-1 visa holders</b>	<p>Can be authorized for full-time employment after completion of studies (definition of completion varies by degree level)</p> <p>Student files OPT application with their host institution</p> <p>Approval is granted by the U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)</p> <p>Student must obtain Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) prior to starting work</p>	<p>None</p> <p>Student must present EAD card to employer on the first day of work as proof of authorization.</p>	<p>Approval takes 2-3 months – students can apply 90 days in advance of their program completion.</p>	<p>No cost to employer</p> <p>\$410 paid by student</p>
<b>H-1B Visas</b>	<p>H-1B temporary worker non-immigrant status is designated for individuals coming temporarily to the U.S. to perform services in a specialty occupation.</p> <p>The position must be a specialty occupation as defined as “an occupation that requires (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and (B) attainment of a bachelor’s or higher degree in the specific specialty as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.” INA214(i); 8USC 1184(i).</p>	<p>Sponsorship is required for H-1B visa filing.</p> <p>Link to USCIS site which explains the employer requirement and steps needed to file H-1B petition: <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-1b-specialty-occupations-dod-cooperative-research-and-development-project-workers-and-fashion-models">https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-1b-specialty-occupations-dod-cooperative-research-and-development-project-workers-and-fashion-models</a></p>	<p>Varies depending on employer. The rules allow H-1B petition to be filed 6 months in advance of H-1B start date.</p>	<p>Filing fees for H-1B petition can be found at: <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/forms/h-and-l-filing-fees-form-i-129-petition-nonimmigrant-worker">https://www.uscis.gov/forms/h-and-l-filing-fees-form-i-129-petition-nonimmigrant-worker</a></p>
<b>Academic Training (AT)</b> <b>J-1 Visa Holder</b>	<p>AT can be done Before and After completion of study</p> <p>Student applies for approval from their host institution</p> <p>Students are eligible to work anywhere from 18 to 36 months depending on length of study.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Approval takes 3-10 business days</p>	<p>No cost to employer</p>

# EMPLOYING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

This information will assist prospective employers in understanding some basic work options for internationals who may want to work for their company.

## F-1 Visa Holders

The F-1 visa status is a temporary non-immigrant student visa. F-1 visa holders must obtain work authorization before beginning employment off-campus. Individuals holding F-2 visa status are dependents of the F-1 visa holder and are not, under any circumstances, allowed to earn income in the United States.

***Employers do not incur processing costs for employment authorization of international students while they are on F-1 or J-1 visas.***

## J-1 Visa Holders

J-1 student visa status is granted to students who participate in international exchange programs between Michigan State University (MSU) and universities in other countries, or whose education in the U.S. is financed directly or indirectly by the U.S. government, the government of the student's home country, an international organization of which the U.S. is a member, or by another institutional sponsor. J-1s have some work authorization options that must be pre-approved.

## BEFORE GRADUATION

### On Campus Limitation

Students in F-1 and J-1 status are required to be full-time students and may work on-campus up to 20 hours, or in the “practical training” options below.

### Practical Training Options

International students are eligible for temporary work authorization that permits them to engage in part- or full- time employment in their field of study.

### Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT is temporary employment authorization directly related to a F-1 student's academic program and granted by the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS). CPT is typically authorized on a part-time (up to 20 hours a week) basis during the school year and can be authorized on a full-time (over 20 hours a week) or part-time basis during vacation periods. CPT gives students the possibility to work off-campus or to work for more than 20 hours a week on campus if certain qualifications are met. Some types of CPT are as follows:

- **Required for the degree program:** In order for training to be considered “required”, all students in the degree program must be required to complete an internship or practicum in order to receive their degree. A few programs at MSU have such requirements.
- **Integral part of an established curriculum:** If the internship/work experience is not required, then it must be taken for academic credit. Students will work with their academic advisor to fill out the “CPT Authorization Form” issued by OISS. Please see the following link for more information: <http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/documents/students/cpt.pdf>

The student must receive a job offer before securing the employment authorization, and thus will be unable to provide documentation at the interview stage. OISS needs a signed, written offer of employment on the company's letterhead as part of the CPT application requirements.

**Proof of Work Authorization:** The employer and dates for which the student is authorized to work will appear on the student's Form I-20 (certificate of eligibility). Students cannot begin work before the start date on the Form I-20, or continue working after the end date. CPT authorization may be renewable if the student continues to be eligible.

### **J-1 Academic Training**

J-1 students may apply for temporary work authorization called "Academic Training" (AT)

either prior to or after completion of studies to accept positions within their field of study. Students seeking or completing bachelor's or master's degrees are eligible for 18 months of AT. Students seeking or completing doctoral degrees are eligible for 36 months of AT. Non-degree (exchange) students are eligible for AT authorizations matching the length of time they have spent studying in the U.S. Example: A one-semester (4-month) exchange student is eligible for up to 4 months of AT.

## **AFTER GRADUATION**

The U.S. government allows students to apply for authorization to gain practical work experience to supplement their academic programs. Many employers find this to be a useful opportunity to hire a student with valuable international perspectives.

### **F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

OPT is defined as "temporary employment authorization directly related to the field of study". F-1 students are eligible for up to 12 months of employment authorization under this category.

For students whose majors are given the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) designation, employment may

be extended for an additional 24 months, if the F-1 visa holder is employed by an E-Verify employer.

OPT is recommended by OISS at MSU and granted by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The application process can take several months.

**Proof of Work Authorization:** Students on OPT will receive an employment authorization document or EAD card. USCIS issues the EAD and it specifies the dates of authorized employment.

**J-1 Academic Training:** see the "before graduation" section.

## **EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS**

Beyond CPT, OPT, or AT, there are options for employing internationals.

### **Temporary Worker (H-1) Visa**

The H-1B visa allows foreign nationals to work in the United States in specialty occupations. The H-1B visa category has the following key requirements:

Applicant must have theoretical and practical application of a highly specialized body of knowledge and must have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree or its equivalent in a specialized field. The company is the petitioner

of the H-1B and the international is the beneficiary. The company should consult their HR and legal counsel when completing these petitions.

The employer makes an H-1B visa petition to the Department of Labor and USCIS. An employer may petition for H-1B status for a maximum of 3 years at a time. An individual can hold H-1B status for up to a maximum of six years. It is advised to plan petition applications early as timing of filing is critical due to H-1B visa limits.

**O-1 Visa: Individuals with Extraordinary Ability to Achievement** The O-1 nonimmigrant visa is for the individual who possesses extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics, among other fields, and are recognized nationally or internationally for those achievements. An O-1 petition has an initial period of stay of up to 3 years. Subsequent extensions may last for no more than one year at a time. There is no limit to the number of extensions.

**Nonimmigrant NAFTA Professional (TN) Visa** The TN visa allows citizens of Canada and Mexico, as NAFTA professionals, to work in the U.S. in a prearranged business activity for a U.S. or foreign employer. Permanent residents, including Canadian permanent residents, are not able to apply to work as a NAFTA professional. Both Canadian and Mexican citizens can be admitted to the United States in TN status in increments of up to three years. There is no cumulative time limit on TN status. Status is renewable indefinitely, provided the stay remains temporary in nature.

**E-3 Certain Specialty Occupation Professionals from Australia** The E-3 classification applies only to nationals of Australia. The specialty occupation requires theoretical and practical application of a body of knowledge in professional fields and at least the attainment of a bachelor's degree, or its equivalent, as a minimum, for entry into the occupation in the U. S. There is no cumulative time limit on E-3. It is renewable every two years indefinitely, provided the stay remains temporary in nature.

**Intra-Company Transfer (L) Visa** L Intra-company Transferees who, within the three preceding years, have been employed abroad continuously for one year, and who will be employed by a branch, parent, affiliate, or subsidiary of that same employer in the U.S. in a managerial, executive, or specialized knowledge capacity may be eligible for an L Visa.

USCIS website: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-nonimmigrant-workers>

## PERMANENT RESIDENCY

Lawful permanent residency is a status granted by the U.S. government to citizens of other countries. One option to obtain PR is through an “employer-based petition”. For example, the employer may document the need for a person’s occupational skills, or the individual must prove international recognition is his or her field. While an employer may sponsor an individual, USCIS makes the final decision. Make no promise or guarantee to the employee.

**USCIS website:** <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers>

## LEGAL SUPPORT

### Find an immigration attorney

OISS can only provide general information on visa categories beyond F and J. International students and U.S employers need to talk to an immigration attorney regarding specific cases.

American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Offers a “find a lawyer” option.  
<http://www.aila.org/>

## SECTION 6

# CAREER ADVISOR GUIDE TO HELPING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The role of OISS  
Frequently asked questions by career advisors  
Tips for advising international students

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# THE ROLES OF THE OFFICE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS

## Within the context of Career Services, OISS provides the following support

- Advise on international students' U.S. work authorization options.
- Member of the Career Initiatives for International Students group.
- Organize events in conjunction with the Career Services Network on international student career development.
- Serve as liaison to the Global Talent Retention Initiative of Michigan (GTRI), an organization focused on employer education of how to employ international students for short- or long-term employment opportunities.
- Develop and contribute to resources for international students to help them navigate Career Development within U.S. higher education.
- Collaborate with Career Services Network on BUS102: International Student Career Certificate Program.

## Point of contact within OISS for Career Services

Elizabeth Matthews  
Assistant Director  
Office for International Students & Scholars  
Email: [elizm@msu.edu](mailto:elizm@msu.edu)  
Phone: 517-353-1720

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY CAREER ADVISORS

U.S. immigration regulations, under certain circumstances, allow international students to pursue part- or full-time employment during the course of their studies. Please refer to the [Work Authorization Options](#) section for a comparison of the various work authorization options.

### What does OISS tell international students about finding employment?

OISS expresses the importance of having a partnership between OISS and the Career Services Network. We explain that, to be successful, students must understand both their work authorization options as well as prepare themselves for the U.S. workplace through using the large number of programs and resources that the Career Services Network has to offer.

We help to manage their expectations by explaining the difficulties one may face in finding U.S. employment, especially if the student is an undergraduate or is not pursuing a degree in any of the Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) fields. We urge them to recognize that they, ultimately, must be the best candidate for the job and are responsible for their success.

We have also turned our attention towards assisting students with networking skills. This serves not only to help them build relationships in all aspects of campus life, but we see how this is also an integral part of their career development

## What do you cover in orientation?

Career Services professionals have accompanied OISS to our Pre-Departure Sessions in China to speak with incoming international students during and the Career Services Network attends our Resource Fair during orientation. Orientation leaders are also briefed on career support information, and the international parent orientation has a focus on MSU Career Services.

## What does OISS tell international students about talking with employers?

Because we know this is a sensitive topic for both students and employers, OISS has created the resources: [How to Talk to Employers about Your Immigration Status](#) (page 9) and the [Employer's Guide to Hiring International Students](#) (from page 30 - 35). The resources for employers could be provided from students or Career Services staff to prospective employers. OISS is available to come to career fairs to meet with employers and has hosted information sessions for employers in the past. We welcome further collaboration in this area to assist with employer education.

## What can Career Services Professionals do to educate employers?

Career Services Professionals should feel free to circulate any of the documents we have related to international student employment such as the *Employer's Guide to Hiring International Students* or work authorization information. It may be helpful to state that you're not asking them to consider international students instead of domestic students, but just for them to know they are part of the MSU talent pool. For other talking points, you can refer to the Global Talent Retention Initiative (GTRI) as just one example: [www.migtri.org](http://www.migtri.org). OISS welcomes further conversation on this topic.

## How can we train ourselves on the cultural “norms” and customs of students?

The best way to find out about international student challenges and what they would like in terms of programs and resources is to hold focus groups. OISS can help you connect with international students. Additionally, we would be happy to collaborate with the Career Services Network to facilitate intercultural communication workshops for Career Services professionals.



## What does “sponsorship” mean?

International students may often refer to “sponsorship”. They are referring to a company petitioning for them to receive an H-1B visa, which is a temporary worker visa that allows them to work in the U.S. for up to 6 years. Many students hope to transition to this visa type from their student visa. You can check the [Work Authorization Options](#) (page 4-14) section for more details.

## Do you advise international students to get work authorization if they are volunteering?

Volunteering is defined by the U.S. government as work for which no one else in that position is being paid. There should be absolutely no compensation. If students are unsure if they need work authorization, they should be referred to OISS. We suggest for students to always have work authorization – even if unpaid – to protect their future immigration benefits/visa renewals. Please note that once students graduate, unpaid work is still considered employment. This is just one more reason we suggest that students receive authorization.

## Do you advise international students to get work authorization if they want to start their own business?

You may refer them to OISS. This is a complicated issue and, many times, a student should seek immigration counsel.

## TIPS FOR ADVISING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

If a student is unsure how their immigration status affects their employment options or which U.S. work authorization options are available to them, please refer them to OISS. We have walk-in hours Monday – Friday from 1-3 p.m. in Room 105 of the International Center.

- Be aware of cultural factors – lack of eye contact, projecting self-confidence, networking, speaking directly, or providing strong opinions in the U.S.. This American style may all be deeply challenging to international students. Sometimes simply acknowledging the root of the challenge helps the student to feel more comfortable
- Many international students are worried about their communication skills. Reassure the student that you can understand them, but encourage them to practice interviewing with others (in English, if they are planning to work in the U.S.). OISS Coffee Hours, held each Friday at 4pm in the International Center, is a great place to build communication skills.
- A non-native English speaker may have trouble understanding interview questions – whether the language, the intent of the question, or sometimes figuring out the right answer. Assure them that it's okay to ask for the question to be repeated, as long as they don't ask so often that the interviewer begins question their language abilities. Provide them with alternative ways to clarify a question or to buy time to think.
- Help students to develop their job search strategies and direct them toward resources that may be more applicable to them such as *GoinGlobal* or *MyVisaJobs*. *GoinGlobal* provides students with cultural guides and employers most likely to sponsor H-1B visas based on state and metro area. Students may also be able to look for positions in their home country. *MyVisaJobs* also provides up-to-date lists of top H-1B employers in the U.S. <https://careernetwork.msu.edu/resources-tools/student-resources/resources-for-international-students.html>
- Help students think strategically about the types of businesses or organizations that would be interested in them – businesses trading in their home country or expanding within a geographic region is an obvious example. Others include organizations who have a history of working with international students.

