



International Student Internship Guidelines for Employers

Employers may often be unfamiliar with international student employment options like Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT). They might assume that hiring an international student requires them to immediately initiate work visa sponsorship, which is not the case. International students are eligible and allowed to obtain work authorization.

International students who plan to conduct internship or seek a job are encouraged to bring a letter from the Kentucky State University's Office of International Student Experiences to give to potential employers at an interview or in other communications.

The purpose of this document is to illustrate options available for employers to hire international students for internships and full-time career opportunities during their studies and/or after graduation. Most international students are either on non-immigrant F-1 student status or non-immigrant J-1 student status. Currently, KSU only have F-1 international students.

“An F-1 visa is granted to a person coming to the United States to attend college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school or other academic institution or language training program approved by the U.S. Attorney General for study by foreign students. The visa holder plans to return home after completing studies. This is the most common non-immigrant visa for an international student attending undergraduate and graduate school. Students are granted F-1 status until the completion of the academic program and 12 months of post-program practical training. The purpose of the F-1 visa is to provide an opportunity for study in the United States. Anything outside of study, including employment, is an exception to the visa. Authorization for employment is strictly limited to certain situations. The student holding F-1 status for a full academic year and in good academic standing may work off campus. Such work authorization is granted when the student has sustained unforeseen economic hardship. Also, the student may not work for more than 20 hours per week when school is in session, but may work full time during holidays and vacations, including breaks between terms, provided the student intends to register for the next school term.” International students who plan to work off-campus must have their CPT or OPT approved.

Curricular Practical Training is designed to fulfill the internship requirement of a course of study.

“Curricular Practical Training (CPT): An F-1 student may perform curricular practical training

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prior to the completion of the educational program as part of his or her educational experience. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) defines this type of training as ‘alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through agreements with the school.’

Optional Practical Training. OPT is temporary employment authorization that gives F-1 student an opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to a practical work experience off campus.

Pre-Completion Practical Training (OPT): This is temporary employment directly related F-1 student’s major field of study that takes place before they complete their program of study. Any authorized Pre-Completion OPT during a degree program will be subtracted from the time available for Post-Completion OPT.

“Post-Completion Practical Training (OPT): This is temporary employment directly related to the student’s major area of study that takes place after the student completes a full course of study. Authorization for this training may be granted for a maximum of 12 months of full-time or part-time work. Those on a student visa can only gain authorization once for this type of training.”

Kentucky State University can process both CPT and OPT paperwork for students. For CPT (which is the most common internship work authorization), Kentucky State and the Federal government require that the employer submit a signed letter on the organization’s letterhead which should confirm the job offer, dates of employment, salary information, and should include a detailed job description. (See Appendix C for a sample letter.) There is additional paperwork that the student will need to complete. If you offer an internship to an international student, please refer him or her to Kentucky State University’ Office of **Global Strategies and International Affairs** for more information:

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Employers may pay international students for internship work, but must disclose this information on the letter submitted to Kentucky State University. Employers may also want to verify with the international student that s/he has applied for a Social Security card. If the student does not have a Social Security card, Kentucky State University’s Office of International Student Experiences can

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help the student obtain one. However, please note that a Social Security Number alone is not sufficient proof of work authorization for international students. They must have their CPT or OPT approved before they start to work. All employees must complete their I-9 process at the time their employment begins.

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