International Graduate Student
Guide to the Job Search
in the United States

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | **GRAD**

Content:

What is this guide?

The *International Graduate Student Guide to the Job Search in the United States* helps graduate students and postdocs at the University of Chicago better understand and navigate the search for employment in the U.S. The guide also aids university advisors who work with international students and employers who seek to hire international students.

Why did we create this guide?

In today's increasingly global economy, international students are a valuable part of the talent pool that universities provide to employers. International students bring unique benefits, such as diversity, adaptability, global perspectives, and international connections.

However, international students may find it difficult to conduct a U.S. job search. Both international students and U.S. employers can be unfamiliar with work visa options, and international students may feel ill-equipped to handle U.S. employers' expectations and practices. Please consider the tips and recommendations provided in this guide to become a more competitive candidate.

Who wrote this guide?

This guide was created by UChicagoGRAD and the Office of International Affairs at the University of Chicago. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact an advisor:

Josephine Cai
Assistant Director, UChicagoGRAD **josephinecai@uchicago.edu**
Amima Diagne
Assistant Director, Office of International Affairs **diagnea@uchicago.edu**

Note: This guide is for informational purposes only. Each individual situation may vary. Students with questions are encouraged to contact UChicagoGRAD or the Office of International Affairs for additional guidance.

Section 1

F-1 and J-1 International Student Work Authorization Options in the U.S.

F-1 and J-1 visas are designated for full-time study, but they do allow students to engage in on-campus and some off-campus employment related to their areas of study. Most of these opportunities will require authorization prior to beginning work. This section of the guide will provide a brief overview of the types of work authorization available to F-1 and J-1 students.

Section Topics
F-1 On-campus Employment
F-1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)
OPT Extensions
J-1 On-campus Employment
J-1 Academic Training (AT)
Other Considerations
F-1/J-1 U.S. Work Authorization Chart

F-1 On-campus Employment

During an F-1 student's academic program (before the I-20 program end date), the student is permitted to engage in on-campus employment for a maximum of 20 hours per week while classes are in session (during the academic year). During academic breaks (such as winter and spring breaks) and vacation quarters (such as summer quarter, for many programs), there is no limitation on the number of hours permitted. F-1 students can typically engage in on-campus employment without any specific authorization needed in advance of beginning work. Below are key examples of what may be considered on-campus employment.

The following on-campus employment opportunities do *not* typically require review and employment authorization or documentation by the Office of International Affairs (OIA), as long as they adhere to the requirements outlined above:

- Work done on-campus and paid by the University (such as working at the library or for one of the academic departments)

The following types of opportunities may also be considered on-campus employment, but should be confirmed with OIA before accepting:

- Work done on school premises that provides direct service to students (such as working at the bookstore or a restaurant in Hutch)
- Work performed on- or off-campus at an approved, close educational affiliate of the University. If a student is uncertain if an entity is considered on-campus employment, please contact OIA for confirmation.

For additional details about on-campus employment, visit internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/campus-employment.

F-1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT is an F-1 employment/practical training benefit that allows students to engage in paid or unpaid off-campus training opportunities during their program when the opportunity is integral to their program of study. To be considered "integral," the employment must either fulfill a degree requirement (e.g. a training, internship, or practicum that is required for all students in that program); fulfill a course requirement (e.g. a practical training required for a specific course); or be part of an established, formal co-operative educational agreement between a student's academic program and an external employer.

CPT eligibility and options are based on both immigration and academic policies, and they are specific to the details and requirements of a given academic program. Therefore, CPT options may vary by program (with some programs having CPT options while others do not), but they are always pre-established by the given academic program and OIA.

Key Features of CPT

- Must be directly related to a student's major or field of study.
- Can be for paid or unpaid opportunities.
- Allows for part-time work (20 hours or less per week) during the academic year and full-time work (over 20 hours per week) during breaks and vacation quarters.
- Students must be enrolled full time for one academic year (three academic quarters) before they are eligible.
- Can only be used during (but not after) one's academic program, as reflected in the program dates listed on the I-20.
- Students must have an offer of employment to apply for CPT, since the authorization is for a specific employer.
- Is sponsored by the University, not by the employer. But, the CPT request *does* require the employer to provide a **letter**.
- Requires confirmation from one's academic program that

the opportunity meets the established CPT criteria for that program.

- Must be approved prior to beginning work.
- Is approved on a quarterly basis. If the opportunity will extend beyond one quarter, a new application will be needed for each quarter.
- Approval comes in the form of a new F-1: I-20, and employment details will appear on page 2 under the 'Work Authorization' section.
- More specific application details and processing timeframes (including template letters) can be found on the OIA website.

Students are not permitted to work outside of the approved CPT start and end dates listed on the I-20. Working even one day without proper work authorization can have severe consequences on the student's immigration status and on the company.

CPT FAQs

Is there a limit to how much CPT I can use?
CPT is based on program-specific requirements and opportunities, and it is bounded by those details. But, it is important to note that students who accumulate 12 months of full-time CPT authorization (over 20 hours per week) lose their eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT). Part-time CPT authorization (20 hours or less per week), or fewer than 12 months of full-time CPT authorization, should not affect OPT eligibility.

Can I change employers while on CPT?
Yes, but since CPT is employer specific, F-1 students must apply for new CPT authorization with OIA before working for the new employer.

Review CPT information and application process details at internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/cpt.

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is a type of F-1 off-campus work/practical training authorization for degree-seeking students who wish to gain experience in jobs directly related to their major area of study.

OPT may be used *before or after* a student completes their degree.

- OPT acquired *before* degree completion is referred to as Pre-completion OPT.
- OPT acquired *after* degree completion is referred to as Post-completion OPT.

Most F-1 students will apply for Post-completion OPT to get practical training/work experience in the U.S. after completing their academic programs.

Key Features of OPT:

- A job offer is *not* required for application.
- No employer sponsorship is needed.
- Students must work in a job that is directly related to their degree program or field of study.
- OPT can be used for paid or unpaid opportunities.
- Students must be enrolled full-time for one full academic year before being eligible for OPT.
- Pre-completion OPT (during one's program) allows part-time (no more than 20 hours per week) OPT during the academic year and full-time (more than 20 hours per week) OPT during breaks and vacation quarters. However, students on Post-completion OPT are required to work full time (at least 20 hours per week).
- OPT applications are initiated by the student, and they are authorized by the **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services** (USCIS) . Applications typically take several months to be approved. USCIS does not expedite applications.
- Eligible students have a maximum of 12 months of OPT.
- Students who have earned a degree in a designated STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) area of study may be eligible to apply for an employment extension of an additional 24 months.

Application Process

Specific and up-to-date details and timeframes for the OPT application process can be found on the **OIA website**. Here is a general overview:

1. Request OPT recommendation from OIA.
2. Receive a new I-20 from OIA.
3. Mail the full application to USCIS for their review and processing.
4. Receive receipt notice.
   Note: If USCIS notices anything missing or incorrect upon initial review, the student will receive a rejection notice outlining what was incorrect and inviting them to re-submit their application. If any issues are noted after the initial receipt notice is issued, the student will receive an RFE (Request for Evidence).
5. Approval arrives in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). This card will state the specific start and end dates for OPT.

Responsibilities while on OPT

Student Responsibilities
After an approved period of OPT begins and a student has received their EAD card (and is thus able to begin working), the student is required to report any changes to the following information, within 10 days of the change, via the **SEVP Student Portal** (**studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help**) or through the **OIA OPT Update Form** (**internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/content/opt-update-form**)

- Employment information: employer name, employer address, whether the position is full time or part time, and a brief description of how the work is directly related to the student's area of study
- Current physical address, email address, and phone number
- Employment end date

If a student decides to end OPT early and leave the U.S., or if a student changes to another status in the U.S., they should contact OIA directly so that appropriate action can be taken on the student's F-1 immigration record.

Employer Responsibilities
Employers are not required to be involved in the OPT application process. However, they will need to provide employment verification letters to F-1 OPT students for use upon re-entry to the U.S. after traveling abroad. Reporting of employment information is the responsibility of the student, but reporting may require confirmation of details from an employer.

Note: Students are NOT permitted to begin their employment until their work authorization has been approved and they have physically received an EAD card. Working even one day without proper work authorization can have severe consequences on the student's immigration status and future employment options.

OPT FAQs

Can I have multiple employers while on OPT?
Yes, as long as (1) the student's work with all of the employers adds up to at least 20 hours per week, (2) all of the positions are directly related to the student's area of study, and (3) all employers are reported either to OIA or through the SEVP portal.

What status do I hold while on OPT?
An OPT recipient is still in F-1 student status during their period of approved OPT.

Can I remain in the U.S. while OPT is pending?
Yes, a student can remain in the U.S. as long as their OPT is pending (even after the I-20 program end date), but the student cannot begin working until their OPT has been approved and they receive their EAD card in the mail.

Review more OPT information, FAQs and application process details at internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/opt-optional-practical-training.

OPT Extensions

F-1 STEM OPT Extension

F-1 students who have earned a degree in a **STEM-designated field** may be eligible to apply for an additional 24 months of OPT.

Key Features of the STEM OPT Extension:

- No employer sponsorship is needed; however, employers must be highly involved in training and are responsible for completing the I-983 Training Plan as well as follow-up progress reports.
- STEM OPT can only be used *after* a student completes their initial 12 months of "regular" OPT.
- Students may apply for the STEM OPT extension no sooner than 90 days prior to the current OPT/EAD expiration date and no later than the current OPT/EAD expiration date.
- The application is initiated by the student, authorized by the **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services** (USCIS), and may take several months to be approved. The application must be received by USCIS before the regular OPT expiration date.
- Students must work at least 20 hours per week in a position that directly relates to their STEM degree.
- Students must be compensated for their work. *Unpaid work is not permitted under the OPT STEM extension.*
- Students must have a job offer from an **E-Verify employer**.

Application Process

Specific and up-to-date details and timeframes for the application process can be found on the **OIA website** at **internationalaffairs. uchicago.edu/page/opt-stem-extension**. Here is a general overview:

1. Complete the I-983 Training Plan with the employer.
2. Request the OPT STEM recommendation from OIA (which requires that a student also submit an I-983 Training Plan completed by the student and their employer).
3. Receive a new I-20 from OIA.
4. Mail the full application to USCIS for their review and processing.
5. Receive receipt notice. If USCIS notices anything missing or incorrect upon initial review, the student will receive a rejection notice outlining what was incorrect and inviting the student to re-submit their application. If any issues are noted after the initial receipt notice is issued, the student will receive an RFE (Request for Evidence). After a student receives the receipt notice, they can continue working up to 180 days past the student's OPT EAD expiration date as long as the STEM extension application is still pending.
6. Approval arrives in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). This card will state the specific start and end dates for the OPT STEM extension, which typically starts the day after the student's OPT EAD expires and ends 24 months later.

Student Responsibilities

After the STEM extension has been approved, the student is required to comply with several STEM OPT reporting requirements to keep their F-1 status active while on STEM OPT. These requirements include the following:

- Report current employment and contact information to OIA every 6 months to validate the student's STEM employment, even if there are no changes to report.
- Submit a self-evaluation of their performance (pages 6 and 7 of Form I-983) at the mid-point of employment and at the conclusion of employment for each job they have.
- Submit a new Form I-983 to OIA if there are any changes to the original training plan or if the student gets a new job. OIA must receive the new I-983 prior to any changes. Changes may include but are not limited to the following: employer name and address, decrease in compensation, reduction in hours (if the student is working less than 20 hours a week), employer's EIN, or termination of employment.
- Report to the OIA within 10 days any change in the following: name, address, employer name and address, or a change in employment or immigration status.
- Notify OIA about the termination of employment within 5 days of the change.

Access the online reporting form at **internationalaffairs. edu/content/stem-opt-update-form**, which can be used to report any of the requirements mentioned above, via the OIA website.

Employer Responsibilities

The employer's responsibilities and requirements for a student's STEM OPT include:

- **E-Verify.** The STEM OPT employer must be enrolled in the **E-Verify program**.
- **Compensation.** The STEM OPT student's compensation must be commensurate with the pay of a U.S. citizen with the same credentials in a similar position.
- **I-983 Training Plan.** The student's direct supervisor must review and sign the student's I-983 Training Plan.
- **Changes to I-983 Training Plan.** The direct supervisor must review and sign a new I-983 Training Plan if there are any material changes to the student's job (e.g. supervisor name, compensation).
- **Student Self-Evaluations.** The student is required to complete two self-evaluations to monitor their progress and report on their educational goals. One must be completed at the mid-point of employment, another at the end. The student's direct supervisor must review and sign these self-evaluations, as needed.
- **Loss or Termination of Employment.** The employer must notify OIA when the student's employment is terminated for any reason before the end of the authorized OPT extension period. This report must occur within 5 business days of the end of employment and can be sent via email to **international-affairs@uchicago.edu**.

- **DHS Site Visits.** STEM OPT regulations authorize the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to visit employers who have hired STEM OPT students to confirm that the student is adhering to the training plan on record. In most cases, DHS will provide notice to the employer at least 48 hours in advance of any site visit. For more information please refer to the **Study in The States webpage** at **studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employer-site-visits**.

To find more information about the employer responsibilities listed above, please visit the **Study in the States website of the DHS** at **studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-stem-opt-reporting-requirements**.

Review more STEM OPT information, FAQs, and application process details at **internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/opt-stem-extension**.

Visit the Study in the States STEM OPT Hub at **studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub**.

H1-B Cap-Gap Extension

The "H-1B Cap-Gap Extension" refers to the period of time between the end of a student's F-1 status (the end of OPT/OPT STEM extension or grace period) and the beginning of the student's H-1B status (October 1). The OPT Cap-Gap Extension only applies to students submitting a Change of Status petition (not consular processing) for cap-subject employers.

If a student has an H-1B application pending with or approved by USCIS before the end of their OPT authorization, the Cap-Gap Extension automatically extends an eligible F-1 student's OPT authorization during this "gap" period until the H-1B status becomes active (October 1).

Eligibility

This extension is available to F-1 students whose OPT was approved or who:

- Have an OPT end date on or after April 1 of the current year *and*
- Have a pending or approved Change of Status H-1B petition (I-539) with USCIS
- Filed the H-1B petition in a timely manner with USCIS, according to the acceptance period *and*
- Work for an employer who is subject to the H-1B cap (is not exempt from the cap)

In most cases, USCIS automatically adds the cap-gap extension to the records of students who are eligible. If a student believes the cap-gap should be added to their record but finds that it was not, they should contact their OIA advisor at **internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/about-contact** for more information.

How do I know if my employer is subject to the H1-B cap?
Being cap-subject (meaning subject to an annual limit on H1-B visas per year for certain types of employers) varies depending on the type of employer. An employer will be able to confirm whether they are subject to the cap.

J-1 On-campus Employment

J-1 students can engage in on-campus employment, but it must be approved by OIA in advance. Students can engage in on-campus employment for a maximum of 20 hours per week while classes are in session (during the academic year). During academic breaks (such as winter and spring breaks) and vacation quarters (such as summer quarter, for many programs), there is no limitation on the number of hours permitted.

Below are the most common types of on-campus employment, which should be reported to and approved by OIA in advance:

- Work done on-campus and paid by the University (such as working at the library or for one of the academic departments)
- Work done on school premises that provides direct service to students (such as working at the bookstore or a restaurant in Hutch)
- Work performed on- or off-campus at an approved, close educational affiliate of the University; if a student is uncertain if an entity is considered on-campus employment, please contact OIA for confirmation

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J-1 Academic Training (AT)

Academic Training is a type of J-1 work authorization that allows students to work off-campus in the form of a job, internship, research position, teaching position, cooperative education position, or other opportunity to obtain experience that furthers their academic goals.

There are two types of Academic Training:

- **Pre-completion Academic Training:** training that begins and ends during a student's program at UChicago, before the program end date on the J-1: DS-2019.
- **Post-completion Academic Training:** training that continues upon or begins after the completion of a student's academic program at UChicago; Post-completion Academic Training must begin no later than 30 days after completion of studies and needs to be applied for before the current DS-2019 expires.

Features of AT

- A student may apply for Academic Training authorization from OIA at any time during their studies.
- A student must have an offer of employment to apply for AT since the authorization is for a specific employer and is specific to their job/internship/training opportunity. The required employer letter template can be found on OIA website.
- Students must also have a recommendation from their academic department detailing how the opportunity is related to their area of study and integral to their academic program.
- AT is limited to 18 months or the length of a student's academic program, whichever is shorter. This includes training both before and after the completion of studies. The total training period may not exceed the amount of time spent in the full course of study.
- For postdoctoral training, the overall limit is 36 months.

- All AT is counted as full-time, even if employment is on a part-time basis.

- AT can be paid or unpaid if it occurs before the completion of a student's program.

- A student must be paid (i.e. must receive a salary or other compensation for their services) if AT occurs after the completion of their program of study. If AT occurs after the completion of their program of study, a student must be paid (i.e. receive a salary or other compensation for their services) or must provide other proof of financial support through the post-completion AT period.

- More specific application details and processing timeframes (including template letters) can be found on the OIA website.

- J-1 students must receive Academic Training authorization from OIA before starting their training activity (internship or job). These students are not permitted to work off campus outside of the approved AT start and end dates listed on their DS-2019. Working even one day without proper work authorization can have severe consequences on the student's immigration status and on the company.

AT FAQs

When can I begin Academic Training?
There is no waiting period to apply for AT. However, a student cannot begin the training position before the start date listed on their Form DS-2019.

Can I change employers during Academic Training?
A student can change employers or AT positions only after they have submitted a new AT request form to OIA. Each period of AT is employer-specific. If a student begins working for an employer who is not listed on the Form DS-2019, the student is in violation of their J-1 status. The student is also not permitted to have any gap in AT periods during the post-completion period.

Review specific AT information at **internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/academic-training**.

Request J-1 AT employment authorization at **internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/content/request-j-1-academic-training**.

Other Considerations

Answering Questions about International Student Status

During the job application process, students will encounter some questions regarding their immigration status and eligibility to work. These questions are asked to determine your employment sponsorship requirements. Two main questions are usually asked:

"Are you eligible to work in the United States?" The answer is "yes," as the F-1 and J-1 student statuses are eligible for work authorization.

"Would you, now and in the future, require sponsorship in order to work in the United States?" This answer would also be "yes," as student status and associated work authorization are limited, and a student would eventually require sponsorship from an employer or another immigration status in order to continue working after the F-1 or J-1 student status ends.

Life after F-1/J-1 Status

Students must end their F-1 or J-1 employment once their practical or academic training has expired. However, depending on the student's individual situation, there may be employment-based or other types of immigration statuses that a student may be eligible for that would allow them to continue working in the U.S. beyond their F-1 or J-1 status. Many students work with their employers, who may be able to sponsor them in an employment-based status such as H1-B.

Please note that the OIA student services team is not able to advise students on visa types outside of the F-1 and J-1 student statuses. However, one can find general information about the types of visa statuses that allow work on the USCIS website: **uscis.gov/working-united-states/working-us**.

F-1/J-1 U.S. Work Authorization Chart

	Employment Authorization	Requirements	Timing	Cost	Hours per Week
F-1 Students: On-campus Employment	No work authorization is required by OIA if you are working on campus or with a close educational affiliate.	Employment must take place on campus or off campus with a close educational affiliate.	Upon formal offer and acceptance of the on-campus position.	No cost to employer or student.	**Part time** – maximum of 20 hours/week while school is in session (during academic quarters) **Full time** – over 20 hours per week when school is not in session (during academic breaks)
F-1 Students: Curricular Practical Training (CPT)	CPT can be done prior to completion of study. Students apply for CPT approval with OIA prior to the start of employment.	CPT can be applied for only after 3 quarters of full-time enrollment. A job offer letter is required as part of a CPT request.	After a student submits a CPT request to OIA, approval typically takes approximately 1 week.	No cost to employer or student.	**Part time** – maximum of 20 hours/week while school is in session (during academic quarters) **Full time** – over 20 hours per week when school is not in session (during academic breaks)
F-1 Students: Optional Practical Training (OPT)	OPT can be authorized for full-time employment after the completion of studies (definition of completion varies by degree level). The student files an OPT application with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)	The student must obtain an Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) prior to starting work. The EAD card is proof of work authorization.	Applications typically take several months to be approved, and current processing times are linked from OIA website. Students can apply 90 days in advance of their program completion.	The OPT application fee is paid by student at the time of filing. No cost to employer.	Post-completion OPT requires a minimum of 20 hours per week.
J-1 Students: Academic Training (AT)	AT can be done before and after the completion of study. Students are eligible to work from 18 to 36 months, depending on length of study.	AT training needs to be authorized before the start of employment.	After a student submits the AT request to OIA, approval typically takes approximately 1 week.	No cost to employer or student.	No weekly minimum—all work hours are counted as full-time.
J-1 Students: On-campus Employment	Students can work on campus or with a close educational affiliate, but they should seek approval from OIA first.	The employment must take place on campus or off campus with a close educational affiliate.	Upon approval from OIA (typically within 1 week).	No cost to employer or student.	**Part time** – maximum of 20 hours/week while school is in session (during academic quarters) **Full time** – over 20 hours per week when school is not in session (during academic breaks)

Section 2

The U.S. Job Search

The prospect of navigating the U.S. job search can be daunting. Finding employment is itself a full-time job, one that requires energy and commitment on the part of applicants. Section 2 of this guide will recommend steps that you can follow to organize your search for employment. The guide also provides tips and best practices for each stage of your journey.

Section Topics
Getting Started
Networking Basics
Informational Interviews
Elevator Speeches
LinkedIn
Résumés
Cover Letters
Interviewing
U.S. Office Culture

Getting Started

Understanding Yourself and the Job Market

The first step of the job search process is discovery—of yourself, the labor market, and your ideal jobs. You need to understand your interests, strengths, and passions and then seek out compatible opportunities for employment.

- **Labor Market Information. O*NET Online** is a platform sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. It contains a comprehensive repository of professions and their outlooks within the U.S. job market.
- **Self-Assessment.** MyNextMove is an interest inventory based upon the John Holland Codes. It asks you to answer questions about the types of work that you enjoy. The tool will then suggest careers and professions that match your interests and training. You can cross-reference these professions with the information in O*NET Online.

For example, if you use MyNextMove and learn that your dominant Holland Codes are Investigative (I) and Conventional (C), you can input these interests into O*NET's **interests search tool**. Then, explore the list of relevant occupations, such as **management analyst**, **computer and information research scientist**, **historian**, **archivist**, **statistician**, or **financial quantitative analyst**.

Researching Industries, Companies, and Salaries

A number of resources can help you find information on prospective industries, companies, and salary ranges:

- **Vault career guides** – log in with your UChicago email for free access
- Individual company websites
- LinkedIn
- UChicago Library guides to **company research** and **business/economic research**
- **GRAD Gargoyle jobs board** > Jobs > Search
- **Indeed jobs site**
- Salary research tools **Glassdoor** and **Payscale**

Salary research is particularly important as you begin applying for jobs, because employers may directly ask about your salary expectations. In general, though, you should avoid asking an employer questions about pay and benefits while interviewing.

Any discussion about salary would be premature until you have an offer. Please contact your UChicagoGRAD career advisor for more information on salary negotiation.

Identifying Employers Who Sponsor H-1B Visas

Employers do hire international students with practical training work authorization. However, if your employment extends beyond the practical training period, your employer will need to petition for an employment visa. The H-1B is a common employment visa (though there are other options). The resources below allow you to search for employers who have sponsored H-1B visas in the past. You can search by job title or industry and identify companies that have sponsored employees for U.S. permanent residency.

- **GoinGlobal** – log in to **GRAD Gargoyle** for free access > shortcuts > GoingGlobal - Country Career Guide
- **MyVisaJobs**

Discussing Work Authorization and International Student Status with Employers

There is no official time when you are required to tell an employer about your international student status. Most employers will ask about your status as part of an online application form or as part of an interview.

International students should (1) respond honestly when asked about your immigration status and work authorization eligibility, and (2) ensure that you discuss these topics with employers before the interview process concludes, so that employers can make informed hiring decisions.

Employers who value talent will understand that the skills and global perspectives that you bring to the company will far outweigh any extra measures needed to hire you. By disclosing your immigration status, you can begin a conversation about navigating your employment options.

Employers unfamiliar with the process of sponsoring an employee's immigration status may be intimidated. You can prepare for this scenario by learning as much as you can about your options. You can then present this information to the employer in a confident, informed way that encourages the employer to consider making you an offer.

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Networking Basics

What is Networking?

Networking is the process of establishing relationships with people, such as peers and alumni, who will become your community of colleagues and friends as you move through your career. Networking is *not* about asking for preferential treatment, nor is it simply an exchange of information and contacts. Rather, it is a common way to connect with professionals who can teach you about their jobs and organizations (and, in turn, learn from you).

When networking, you should not overtly ask for employment. If you say, "Do you have a job for me?" the answer is likely to be "no," and then the conversation is over. If you meet a networking contact who offers to recommend you for or refer you to a job, that is a bonus. However, it is not an expectation you should impose on a professional contact.

Why Should I Network?

Networking can be key to securing employment in the U.S., and it should be a priority during your job search. Networking activities could result in the following:

- Improved conversation skills
- Insider tips that help you stay current in your field
- Job search advice specific to your field
- A new friend or professional ally

- Names of additional people to contact, which may result in follow-up interviews
- An offer of employment

How Do I Develop My Network?

Chances are that you already know more people than you realize. Your network may include the following:

- Family, friends, roommates, and significant others
- School classmates, faculty, staff, and alumni
- Past and present co-workers
- Neighbors, clubmates, and members of associations or religious communities
- Acquaintances that you meet at the gym, cafes, and neighborhood stores
- Connections on social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter

Opportunities to network can arise at any time and place. Never underestimate an opportunity to make a connection. This does not mean that networking comes easily to everyone, of course. If you are an introvert who at times struggles to comfortably interact with others, try building professional connections via informational interviews.

Informational Interviews

What Is an Informational Interview?

Informational interviews are informal conversations with professionals who are working in fields that interest you. They allow you to "interview" a professional to learn useful information about their day-to-day work and the best ways to break into their field. Informational interviews are a common form of networking in the United States, and they are frequently used by job seekers to meet people who can assist with their job search.

Informational interviews are NOT job interviews. The professionals with whom you meet will not, in most cases, be able to offer you a job. Rather, these professionals can share their stories and give you advice, perspective, and additional connections that will make the job search easier. In some cases, these professionals can alert you to new job postings or even become long-term mentors.

You may be asking, *why would a busy professional want to take time out of their day to speak with me?* Many professionals see an informational interview as a way to "pay it forward" and help the next generation, just as someone helped them. Many people also like talking about themselves and sharing their stories—they may be flattered that you asked. In some cases, you may even be able to help the professional you interview by offering a fresh perspective or connections to people that you know.

How Do I Set Up an Informational Interview?

First, decide who you'd like to interview. If you are nervous, you can start by talking to a professional who is already in your immediate network, such as a former colleague, current classmate, friend, or family member. You should not stop there, however. Think next about your extended network or any professionals who you do not yet know but would like to meet. You can identify potential interviewees via LinkedIn, the UChicago Alumni Association platform **WISR**, or company webpages.

To set up an informational interview, you can send a message via email, **LinkedIn**, or **WISR**. Email is the preferred medium for outreach, but it is not always possible to find the email addresses of potential interviewees. Your request should take the form of a brief, one-paragraph message in which you introduce yourself, express interest in the person's career path, and ask for 30 minutes of their time for an in-person meeting (when in-person meetings are possible). Do not attach your résumé to the email, and do not write a message that is desperate, long, or full of questions. You can review a sample message below.

Subject: *UChicago PhD Student Interested in Cyberdyne*

Dear Miles,

I am a current physics PhD student at the University of Chicago, and I noticed in the alumni directory that you work for Cyberdyne Systems Corporation. I plan to graduate in two years, and I am now starting to explore career options. The Skynet initiative at CDI is fascinating, and I would like to learn more about Cyberdyne as well as your personal career path. Would you be willing to speak with me over coffee or lunch sometime in the next two weeks? I look forward to speaking with you soon!

Sincerely,
John Connor

If the potential interviewee does not respond to your request, wait at least a week before following up. When setting up a meeting, do all that you can to make the experience as convenient as possible for the interviewee, including offering to meet at a location of their choosing.

How Do I Conduct an Informational Interview?

Prior to any informational interview, be sure to research the person and their organization thoroughly. Practice introducing yourself (your "elevator speech") and draft a list of open-ended questions that will help you organize the flow of the conversation.

- Could you tell me what a typical day is like for you?
- What do you like about your work? What are the most challenging parts?
- What skills did you gain from your MA/PhD/postdoc that have helped you in your career?
- Would you mind telling me about your career path and how you got to your current position?
- What advice do you have for someone with my background who wants to enter this field/company?
- Is there someone here or elsewhere that you'd recommend I speak with?

Be respectful of the interviewee's time by starting and ending your meeting on time. Feel free to take notes as the person talks—after all, you are there to learn.

How Do I Follow Up after an Informational Interview?

Always send a thank-you email within 24 hours of finishing an informational interview. Add the professional as a new contact on LinkedIn and personalize the LinkedIn request with a short message. As your career exploration or job search continues, you should follow up with the person at least once to provide a status update, especially if the interviewee suggested additional contacts or resources. You should also be alert to ways that you can help the interviewee in the future by sending a relevant article or providing a professional connection of your own.

Elevator Speeches

What Is an Elevator Speech?

If you've ever gone to a career fair, employer info session, or networking event, chances are that you have had to introduce yourself to someone you have never met before. Introducing yourself can be challenging, especially when you want to create a good impression. The first things you say about yourself can influence the rest of the conversation. So, what do you do when someone turns to you and says, "Tell me about yourself"?

This is when a good elevator speech comes in handy. An elevator speech is a short, concise statement that you use to introduce yourself and answer questions like "Who are you?" or "What do you do?" Generally, an elevator speech is only 30 seconds to one minute long—that is to say, the time it might take you to ride an elevator from the ground floor to the top. Imagine that when you enter an elevator, you see someone you'd like to meet. What would you say to get that person interested in learning more about you before they reach their floor?

How Do I Deliver a Good Elevator Speech?

A good elevator speech provides the groundwork for further conversation. The speech is not meant to be a run-through of your résumé or an exhaustive list of your skills and experiences. Instead, a good elevator speech accomplishes three central goals:

1. It tells the listener what you are doing now (or shares your most recent career or educational milestone).

2. It provides a big-picture summary of who you are in one to three sentences.

3. It highlights one or two significant experiences that support this summary and reveal something unique about you.

These three goals can also serve as a basic outline for structuring your elevator speech. After letting your listener know what you are doing at present—for example, completing an MA or PhD program—formulate a big-picture summary of yourself that describes your most important skills, characteristics, or experiences.

For example: "I consider myself a problem-solver, and I love using data science to solve complex challenges." Then, share details about one or two of your most significant academic or professional experiences. You could include brief descriptions of a recent internship, job, or research project, or you could discuss a specific skill you have been developing.

Your elevator speech should be flexible and may change depending on your audience. Do not forget that making a good impression involves more than just having the right words. *How* you say those words matters. When introducing yourself to new people, show enthusiasm, make eye contact, and demonstrate interest in the other person. With a good elevator speech, you'll have a solid foundation for making new contacts and expanding your professional network.

LinkedIn

What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a professional networking platform with over 600 million users in more than 200 countries worldwide. The platform enables you to create a profile, connect with professionals, search for jobs, engage with professional associations, and build knowledge about organizations. It is an essential career exploration and networking tool.

How Do I Optimize My LinkedIn Profile?

LinkedIn organizes your profile into four main sections:

- **Intro** (including photo, headline, and summary)
- **Background** (including work experience, education, licenses, certifications, and volunteer experience)
- **Skills**
- **Accomplishments** (including publications, patents, courses, projects, honors, awards, test scores, languages, and organizations)

The intro is your profile's prime real estate. This is what LinkedIn users spend the most time viewing. Here are some best practices for this section:

- **Photo.** People are seven times more likely to accept your LinkedIn connection request if you have a photo. Your photo should be a solo shot (no groups) with good resolution in which you are dressed professionally. You do not need to hire a professional photographer, as most cell phone cameras have high enough resolution.

- **Headline.** The headline is the customizable, 120-character line of text immediately underneath your name. Think of the headline as your branding statement. What do you want people to know about you at a glance? Use important keywords that you want associated with your profile. Review other people's headlines for inspiration.

- **Summary.** The summary enables you to tell a first-person narrative of who you are and where you are headed with your career. Keep this section relatively concise (1 or 2 paragraphs). You can think of the summary as a personal statement that emphasizes your strengths and accomplishments.

The other essential sections of your LinkedIn profile cover your experience, education, skills, and accomplishments. Here are some best practices for these sections:

- **Experience.** Your experience section should convey your accomplishments. The most recent and significant experiences get more description, typically in the form of concise bullet points. Make sure that these descriptions are accessible and easily understood by a wide audience. Your graduate and/or postdoctoral research and/or teaching experience should be included in this section.

- **Education.** Your education section should include all of your earned (or in progress) degrees, with the title of your thesis or dissertation included, as appropriate. You can also include a brief list of activities and societies. Save any descriptions of your educational experiences for the experience section. Certifications and postdoctoral experience do not go into the education section.

- **Skills.** LinkedIn allows you to feature three specific skills in the skills and endorsements section, with a longer list of skills available under "show more." These highlighted skills should be relevant to where you are headed with your career, even if they do not make up the majority of your experience. The skills section should include everything from techniques to softer skills (such as public speaking).

- **Accomplishments.** The accomplishments section is a catchall for a variety of other experiences. It can include things like organizations, languages, honors, awards, test scores, projects, courses, patents, and publications. You should complete these as appropriate.

Building Your LinkedIn Connections

LinkedIn is an excellent tool for finding new connections. Start by identifying appropriate alumni, either from UChicago or your previous academic institutions, as well as professionals who work in your target organizations or geographic areas. You can then reach out to them in a variety of ways:

- **Connect Directly.** Send a connection request to a potential contact with a customized note. Though your note is limited to 300 characters, you should try this method first.

- **Get an Introduction.** Find a connection you have in common. Then, write a note to your mutual connection, asking them to introduce you.

- **Send an InMail.** InMail is the name of LinkedIn's messaging function, which provides unlimited characters and messages. If you have a basic (free) LinkedIn account, you can only send InMails to existing connections. To send InMails to people who are not yet connections, you must upgrade to a premium (paid) account.

- **Message a Fellow Group Member.** You can join up to 50 groups on LinkedIn, from alumni groups to groups focused on a specific career path. After being a member of that group for at least four days, you can send up to fifteen free one-to-one messages to fellow group members each month. This limit is set for all the groups to which you belong (and not for each group individually). Note that only the original message is counted towards the limit; any back-and-forth replies from either party are free.

When reaching out to a new connection, you should

- Send a brief message (one paragraph maximum)
- Express interest in the person's career path
- Ask for 30 minutes of their time for a conversation about their job/company/career path
- Prioritize in-person meetings when possible, but give options for phone or Skype
- Follow up in one week if you do not receive a response

When reaching out to a new connection, you should NOT

- Write an essay
- Seem desperate
- Attach your résumé
- Ask questions by InMail that negate the need to meet
- Send two messages in less than one week
- Ask for a job

Maintaining Your Connections

Once you've made a professional connection, how do you maintain it past the initial conversation? Regularly interacting with your connections via LinkedIn or another means is a healthy professional practice. Here are some common ways to keep in touch:

- Keep your connections updated on your job search progress
- Share interesting articles, papers, or events
- Congratulate your connections for major awards, papers, grants, promotions, and new jobs
- Continue to ask substantive questions about your connections' jobs, companies, or career tracks
- When appropriate, ask if a connection would be comfortable passing along your résumé for an open position at their organization

Using LinkedIn to Identify Job Openings

Many companies use LinkedIn to connect with new talent, either by posting their open positions on LinkedIn's job board or through recruiters or hiring managers who are actively searching for candidates. Be sure to follow companies that interest you, and use LinkedIn's job board to search for positions. You can set your specific "career interests" so that LinkedIn filters and curates appropriate jobs. You can also set an internal flag that lets recruiters know that you are open to new positions.

Résumés

The résumé is the cornerstone of most job applications. It is a curated, tailored document highlighting your best—and most applicable—experience for a position. Unlike the CV, an American-style résumé is limited to one page (though there are some exceptions). You should not include personal details on a résumé. Omit your headshot as well as information like your date of birth, blood type, marital status, gender, or parents' occupations.

There are no "hard and fast" rules to writing a résumé. Because you and your job search are unique, you should review your résumé with a career advisor before submitting it.

Tailoring Your Résumé

To write a strong résumé for each position, follow these steps:

1. Read job descriptions with a pen and highlighter. Make note of repeated competencies and qualifications.
2. Research the hiring organization's mission statement. Who do they serve? What is their mission? Can you mirror this language in your résumé to show similar commitments?
3. Translate your experience and skills into the language of the job ad. It is okay to be overt about this; you can copy key phrases and terms.

Contact Information

Your contact information appears first on the résumé. Do not waste unnecessary space; this should only take up two lines at the top of the document.

Education Section

For current graduate students, an education section listing earned degrees should occupy the space immediately beneath your contact information. Postdocs can elect to put education at the top of the document, or you can lead with your current role.

Experience Sections

Your experience section(s) typically follow education. Rather than using headings like "Work Experience," "Volunteer Experience," or "Professional Experience" for this section, use headings as an opportunity to show the reader your fit for a particular position. Example headings include: Leadership and Management Experience, Communications Experience, Consulting Experience, Technical Experience, Analytical Experience, Research Experience, Writing Experience, Teaching and Mentoring Experience, Laboratory Experience, International Work Experience, Curatorial Experience, Museum Experience, and Nonprofit Work Experience.

Populate the experience sections with your past positions (including your graduate research and teaching), and use bullet points to describe those experiences. Bullet points should be written in the first-person singular point of view (but begin with an action verb, rather than "I"). Use present-tense verbs for current work and past-tense verbs for completed work. Here are some examples of strong verbs:

- **Leadership:** managed, led, oversaw, trained, taught, tutored, mentored, drove
- **Production:** produced, developed, created, innovated, completed, published
- **Analysis:** analyzed, researched, investigated
- **Communication:** wrote, edited, presented, communicated, taught, tutored, mentored

- **Planning and Logistics:** planned, coordinated, executed, facilitated
- **Technical Abilities:** coded, programmed, hacked

Your one-line bullet points should ideally articulate for the reader the kind of project you were engaged in, the purpose of the project, and the impact that resulted from your participation in the project.

- **Project:** What was the nature of the work?
- **Purpose:** What did the work aim to achieve?
- **Impact:** In quantifiable terms, what did you contribute that made the work successful?

Not every bullet will have all three elements. But, you should think of each bullet as an opportunity to describe at least one or two of these elements. You can use quantification to help present a more complete picture of the size, shape, and scope of your projects. For instance, you can include the size of budgets, the number of classes taught, the amount of grant money raised, or the frequency of meetings.

Skills Section

You can conclude the résumé with a section listing all relevant technical skills and language capabilities. While it is great to list information here, you should also show a reader how you developed or employed particular skills in your experience sections.

Tips for Organizing Information

- Each section should be arranged in reverse chronological order.
- Within each individual job or experience, place the most important tasks toward the top of the entry.
- Read the job description and make note of what qualifications and experiences seem most important. If you have experiences similar to those required by the job description, move these higher in each section.
- The most important information on each line should be as far left as possible. Move dates to the right-hand side of the page. Typically, dates are less important than the content of each experience and skill.

Cover Letters

In the United States, cover letters give job applicants space to demonstrate interest in and knowledge of a hiring organization. Cover letters also provide specific and compelling reasons why a candidate is a strong fit for a specific position. As such, each cover letter is highly tailored.

Cover letters also serve as succinct writing samples. It can be helpful to think of them as short argumentative essays. To this end, well-written cover letters should have a main claim about your fit to the advertised position (e.g. "I bring writing and communication skills that qualify me for the position of Editorial Assistant . . .") and should provide the reader with evidence to support this claim (e.g. "For example, as an Editorial Intern with the University of Chicago Press, I copyedited two book-length manuscripts...").

Remember that cover letters work in tandem with your résumé by creating narrative context. Employers will not necessarily read the cover letter *first* and then move onto the résumé. It's likelier that a hiring manager will move back and forth between your résumé and your cover letter. While many job openings no longer require cover letters, these letters are still considered a best practice for job seekers and (if done well) will never count against you.

Cover Letter Basics

An effective cover letter should be one page long and contain the following formal elements:

- Your contact information (name, address, city, state, zip code, phone number, email address)
- The date (month, day, year)
- Employer contact information (recipient name and title if available, company, address, city, state, zip code)
- Salutation ("Dear [recipient's name, if available]" or "Dear Hiring Manager")
- Body of the letter (divided into multiple single-spaced paragraphs)
- Closing ("Sincerely")
- Signature (insert your handwritten signature, then type your name underneath)

Generic Cover Letter Outline

Effective cover letters can adopt many different styles. The outline below represents one tried-and-true approach.

Paragraph 1

- State which position you are applying for
- Provide specific reasons for your interest in the organization (e.g. conversations with current employees or information from the employer's website or the media)
- Make a thesis statement that mentions two distinct competencies (A and B) that make you a fit for the job

Paragraph 2

- Make a claim about competency A (e.g. "I have excellent communication skills . . .")
- Provide one or two examples that serve as evidence for your claim (e.g. "I have presented my research at multiple conferences . . .")

Paragraph 3

- Make a claim about competency B
- Provide one or two examples that serve as evidence for your claim

Paragraph 4

- Express gratitude and look to the future (e.g. "Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to discussing my application in an interview.")

Cover Letter Tips

- Do not forget about the employer. Hiring managers want to see evidence that you have taken time to learn about their organization. Remember to answer the question, "Why do you want to work for *us*?" It is also important to demonstrate that your letter is intended for a specific employer. One way to accomplish this is to name the organization in every paragraph.
- Write less about research. Research skills will be highly valued by employers, but it is not necessary to go into extensive detail about your dissertation, thesis project, or research interests—unless the content of the job matches perfectly with your research projects. Take cues from the job description. Ask whether the job *requires* knowledge of methods or areas in which you have expertise. If it does not, then consider writing about your research *skills* more broadly.
- Do not apologize. Sometimes graduate students and postdocs will include sentences that begin, "Although I do not have the exact experience you're looking for..." Avoid this construction. Instead, talk about how your experience makes you a good fit for a position, and stay positive.

Interviewing

Congratulations! You worked hard on your résumé and cover letter, and now you have received an invitation for an interview. What do you next? When getting ready, keep in mind that an interview is not just a chance to highlight your experiences, accomplishments, and skills. An interview is also an opportunity to show off your personality, communication skills, and enthusiasm for the position.

What to Expect in First-Round Interviews

Many employers conduct two rounds of interviews before extending a job offer. The first round is sometimes called a "screening interview" and might occur over the phone or an online video platform like Skype or Zoom. First-round interviews can vary considerably, so it is important to be prepared for multiple possibilities. Typically, first-round interviews last between 30-45 minutes and focus on big-picture questions that ask you to introduce yourself, highlight key skills and experiences, and discuss why you are interested in the position. Common first-round interview questions include:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why are you interested in this position?
3. Why are you interested in this organization?
4. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
5. What do you think makes you a good fit for this position?

In a first-round interview, it is important to show familiarity with the job description and the employer's mission. For example, when discussing your strengths, highlight strengths that align closely with the job duties. Directly connect your experiences with your ability to succeed in the prospective job and achieve the organization's goals.

At the end of an interview, the interviewer usually asks if you have questions for them. You should prepare at least three questions for your interviewer. Good questions show your curiosity about the position, the organization, and the workplace environment. Your questions can build on the research you have already done, such as, "I noticed that you have a professional development program for new employees. Can you tell me more about this?" In general, try to ask questions that are open-ended and positively framed, such as, "What do you like best about working for this company?" Questions that demonstrate your interest in teamwork and collaboration can also work well, since these skills are valued at many organizations. Some other common questions include "How would you describe a typical workweek in this position?" and "How do you see this position developing over the next few years?"

What to Expect in Second-Round Interviews

After a first-round interview, an employer will typically decide whether they would like to bring you in for an in-person interview. The second-round, or in-person, interview is often more in-depth. An employer might schedule several meetings with different people in the organization. For example, you might have separate interviews with a human resources manager, your potential supervisor, and the director of your division. In other cases, you might interview with a panel of potential colleagues. Sometimes in-person interviews are also combined with a group meal with members of your team.

In an in-person interview, remember that you are interviewing from the moment you walk in the door of the office. Be courteous and cheerful with everyone you meet, from the office receptionist to the CEO. You may have opportunities for small talk throughout the day. No matter who you meet, show that you are a good listener who is responsive and curious. Always be ready to ask someone how their day is going. If all else fails, you can never go wrong with striking up a conversation about the weather (especially in Chicago!).

Second-round interviews usually delve deeper into the experiences and skills described in your résumé and cover letter. Be ready for the same general questions that are typical of a first-round interview. But, you should also be ready to go into more detail about your past experiences, highlighting your skills and strengths with specific examples.

Interviewing as an International Graduate Student or Postdoc

As an international graduate student or postdoc, you bring a wide range of valuable skills and strengths. You should feel confident in highlighting the unique benefits that your international experience brings to an employer. These benefits can include your experience working abroad, your ability to speak multiple languages, and your adaptability to different cultural environments.

Interviewers in the U.S. expect candidates to highlight their accomplishments and show confidence when talking about their strengths. When preparing for an interview, think about three or four significant moments in your academic or professional life that demonstrate your strengths. For example, one of these moments could be an academic project that drew upon your problem-solving and teamwork skills.

U.S. interviewers also expect candidates to be able to discuss their weaknesses. When an interviewer asks about your weaknesses, they are not trying to find reasons to disqualify you. Instead, they are often trying to understand whether you learn from your mistakes and make plans for growth. When discussing your weaknesses, honestly divulge something that you want to improve about yourself. But, in your answer, emphasize the steps you have taken to improve this weakness and what those steps say about your approach to professional development.

Discussing Work Authorization and International Student Status with Employers

There is no official time when you are required to tell an employer about your international student status. Most employers will ask about your status as part of an online application form or as part of your interviews.

International students should (1) respond honestly when asked about your immigration status and work authorization eligibility, and (2) ensure that you discuss these topics with employers before the interview process concludes, so that employers can make informed hiring decisions.

Employers do hire international students with practical training work authorization. However, if your employment extends beyond the practical training period, your employer will need to petition for an employment visa. Employers who value talent will understand that the skills and global perspectives that you bring to the company will far outweigh any extra measures needed to hire you. By disclosing your immigration status, you can begin a conversation about navigating your employment options.

Employers unfamiliar with the process of sponsoring an employee's immigration status may be intimidated. You can prepare for this scenario by learning as much as you can about

your options. You can then present this information to the employer in a confident, informed way that encourages the employer to consider making you an offer.

Interview Etiquette

Attire. Generally, it is appropriate to wear business attire unless the employer specifically tells you that you can dress casually. This is true for both online video interviews and in-person interviews. Business attire can range from mix-and-match slacks/skirt/blazer combos to formal business suits. If you are interviewing for a position in which employees are expected to wear formal business suits on a daily basis, that is what you should wear to the interview. For less formal job environments, a mix-and-match approach might work just as well. It is usually safer and more common to be overdressed (rather than underdressed) for an interview.

What to Bring. Always bring copies of your résumé to any in-person interview. You do not need to give your résumé to the interviewer at the beginning of the interview, but it is always good to be prepared. For in-person interviews that last for many hours, you may want to bring a snack or energy bar with you for a quick energy boost.

Following Up. After any interview, you should send a thank-you email to your interviewer or interviewers, ideally the first business day after your interview. This email should be a relatively short, one-paragraph message in which you thank the interviewer for their time, describe something specific you enjoyed about the interview (for example, an interesting discussion you had about one of the job responsibilities), and express your continued interest in the position. If you are unable to find the email addresses of your interviewers, then you can send the thank-you email to the office manager or recruiter who scheduled the interview, asking them to pass along your message.

Additional Resources

You can find additional resources on interview preparation, including lists of sample interview questions, on the UChicagoGRAD website.

U.S. Office Culture

As an international student, you are already well versed in navigating another culture. This experience can help you when you first start working in a U.S. office. The tactics that you used to understand how to be effective as a student (such as asking questions about expectations and observing how others act in different settings) can also help you here.

Even though office culture varies across the U.S. and across industries, there are some broad norms. As you start your position, use these norms as guiding principles, and adjust according to the information you receive from others. When in doubt, ask your manager.

U.S. Office Norms

Time Management. There are firm expectations about time in U.S. office settings. This is the case because time is highly valued (you may have heard the U.S. saying "time is money"). Employees are expected to arrive on time and stay at work until the end of the business day (unless a different arrangement was negotiated). Employees arrive on time for all meetings. Projects are completed by the time specified. In general, tardiness is frowned upon. Some U.S. employees eat at their desks, at least some days of the week. Depending on your specific office environment, you may sometimes be expected to work longer than official office hours suggest.

Manager-Staff Relationships. Most U.S. offices are organized according to hierarchical structures (e.g. Director > Associate Director > Assistant Director *or* Vice President > Managing Director > Director > Senior Manager). The manager-staff relationship is often cooperative. Managers typically expect their staff to share their opinions and provide input. While the manager has the final decision-making power, decisions tend to be shaped by the input of the staff.

Individualism. Teamwork and collaboration are important in U.S. offices. At the same time, individual success is valued. This means that staff members are expected to be confident about the unique value they bring to a project and team. Individual contributions (that benefit the team as a whole) are commonly highlighted by individuals themselves, other team members, and supervisors. Be a team player (one who listens to, responds to, and supports others) who knows your value.

Informality. A sense of informality characterizes many U.S. offices. This can be observed in the way people address each other (by first name, including for supervisors); the prevalence of small talk (typically low-stakes topics such as the weather, television, and music); and employees' relaxed postures (e.g. leaning back in a seat during a meeting). Do not misunderstand this informality as a lack of hierarchy or respect. Study the behavior of your coworkers to see what kind of informal behavior is appropriate in your specific office environment.

Action Bias. It is quite common for people in the U.S. to say that they are busy. Especially in an office environment, where productivity is highly prized, employees like to show that they work hard and can produce outcomes. As a result, employers value going above and beyond to complete a project. If you are uncertain about what is appropriate, watch other team members or ask your manager for guidance.

Section 3

Career Development and Fellowship Resources at UChicagoGRAD

What is UChicagoGRAD?

UChicagoGRAD offers a range of services and resources to support graduate students and postdoctoral scholars as they navigate their careers at UChicago and beyond. UChicagoGRAD's pioneering, tailored initiatives range from training in writing and public speaking to career exploration treks, internships, employer recruitment fairs, and alumni networking events. With opportunities like these, UChicagoGRAD is building pipelines to help graduate students and postdocs convey their invaluable knowledge to the places where it is most needed in society.

Section Topics
Introduction to Career Advisors
Making an Advising Appointment
When to See an Advisor
Workshops and Camps
Career Fairs and Conferences
Employer Information Sessions
Fellowship Resources

Introduction to Career Advisors

UChicagoGRAD's career development team is a dedicated group of advisors and relationship builders. We are not a placement office; instead, we support graduate students and postdocs in their self-directed career exploration and job search processes. With academic and professional backgrounds that align with those of the populations we serve, UChicagoGRAD's career team understands the graduate and postdoctoral experience and the distinct value that rigorous advanced-degree training brings to the wider world.

We support graduate students and postdocs by providing individualized advising, skill-building workshops, career exploration events, and connections to employers and alumni. Our nationally recognized resources and programs equip those we serve to become the next generation of leaders in academia, industry, nonprofits, and government. We encourage graduate students and postdocs to bring their passion for inquiry and

innovation to the career development process, empowering them to define and achieve their own visions of professional success.
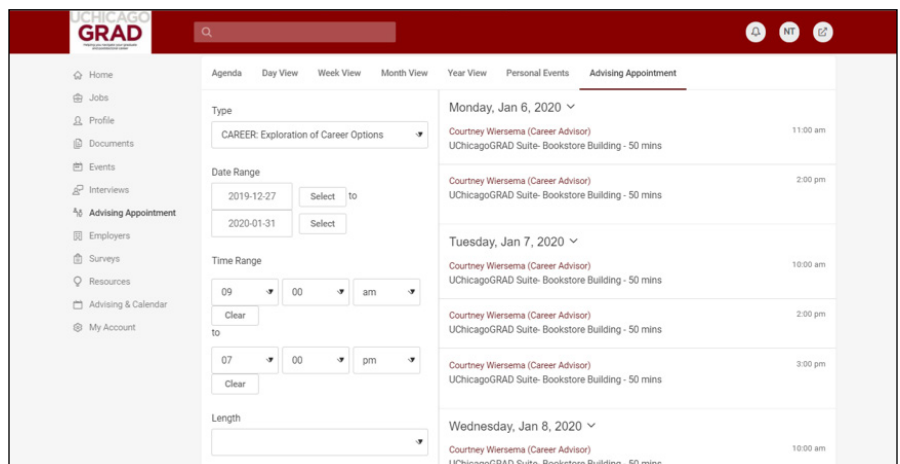
UChicagoGRAD's career advisors provide one-on-one, private advising appointments on a number of topics, including:

- Career planning and exploration
- Job search strategies
- Professional networking
- Online profiles
- Résumé and cover letter reviews
- Connections to additional on-campus activities
- Negotiation of job offers
- Interview preparation and practice

Making an Advising Appointment

To make an appointment, visit **GRAD Gargoyle** at **grad-uchicago-csm.symplicity.com**. GRAD Gargoyle is UChicagoGRAD's system for signing up for career advising, workshops, employer and graduate events, and career fairs. It also features a job board with internships and full-time positions. After logging on to the system, follow these steps to set up your appointment:

- Click on "Advising Appointments" in the right-hand column
- Select the type of appointment, and leave blank the date range, time range, length, location, and day of the week
- Select available advisors and hit "Refine Results" (this will show you the advisor's availability)
- Select the date/time that works best for your schedule
- Leave a short note detailing what you would like to discuss, and indicate if this will be a phone/Skype appointment

- Attach any relevant documents, if appropriate
- Click "Submit Request," and you will receive a confirmation email shortly

When to See an Advisor

Masters students should see a career advisor early within the first quarter of your program, especially if you plan to participate in the fall/winter recruitment season of industries such as consulting, finance, and technology. You can then schedule follow-up appointments as needed.

PhD students and postdocs should see an advisor at least once a year, especially at key moments during your time at UChicago. This could be when you are thinking about changing your career trajectory, planning for an internship or job search, looking for feedback on your application materials, or needing practice for an upcoming interview.

Workshops and Camps

UChicagoGRAD invites you to **browse the calendar** of upcoming workshops, conferences, info sessions and career fairs at **grad. uchicago.edu/event-calendar**. Register for events in **GRAD Gargoyle** at **grad-uchicago-csm.symplicity.com**. Select workshops and camps are listed below. Additional workshops are offered throughout the year, including résumé and cover letter workshops, which are offered monthly.

International Student and Postdoc Series

Offered in collaboration with the Office of International Affairs, this workshop series addresses the specific challenges international graduate students and postdocs face during the job search, and it empowers you to navigate these experiences. Topics include networking, interviewing, U.S. résumés and cover letters, work authorization, and visa concerns.

English Career Conversation Hour

Offered in collaboration with the English Language Institute, this quarterly series brings together international graduate students and postdocs to converse on topics such as interviewing, networking, the U.S. job search, making small talk in a professional setting, and informational interviewing.

GRADTalk Oral Communications Training

GRADTalk offers workshops throughout the year that train you for public speaking, in-class communication, conference presentations, job talks, and interviews. Recent events include "Making Effective Comments in Class," "Acing the First-Round Screening Interview," "Improving Your Interview Skills," and "Public Speaking 101."

Job Search Spring Break Camp

This series of workshops equips you to navigate the job search for positions in industry, nonprofits, and government. Topics include exploration and self-assessment frameworks, networking, résumés and cover letters, and interview preparation.

Academic Job Market Summer Camp

In collaboration with the Chicago Center for Teaching, UChicago faculty, and faculty from other area institutions, this five-day series helps you put your best foot forward on the academic job market. In addition to sessions on job market materials, space is provided to hone interview skills, navigate identity, create a scholarly website, and explore international academe. These workshops are also offered in the fall and winter quarters.

Consulting Summer Camp

This five-day event gives you an introduction to the consulting industry, provides introductions to best practices in job documents and interviews, and serves as an opportunity to meet with consultants from a variety of firms.

Careers in Higher Education Administration

This series introduces you to careers in higher education administration, and it features alumni who translated their academic skills into meaningful careers on campus.

Career Exploration Series

This five-week workshop series introduces you to the theory and practice of career exploration. The series offers opportunities for skills, interests, and values assessments, and it encourages reflection and discourse. Participants finish the series by creating individual career exploration plans.

Professional Skills Series

This series offers hands-on instruction in leadership, teamwork, U.S. office culture, professional communication, time management, project management, and conflict resolution.

Networking and Social Media Workshops

Workshops are offered throughout the year on topics like LinkedIn, digital presence, personal branding, networking, and elevator pitches.

Negotiation Workshops

Workshops on negotiating job offers in academia, industry, nonprofits, and government are offered throughout the year. UChicagoGRAD staff also offer the American Association of University Women Salary Negotiation Start Smart workshop.

Career Fairs and Conferences

GRADFair

GRADFair is the annual fall career fair exclusively for graduate students, postdocs, and recent graduate alumni—one of the only such career fairs in the country. You can find internships and full-time jobs, network with employers, and learn about future opportunities. Employers indicate which of their job opportunities are open to international students.

Data Science and Business Analytics Career Fair

The Data Science and Business Analytics Career Fair, held during winter quarter, facilitates the recruitment of advanced-degree candidates with analytical and computational skills. Employers recruit students from programs such as MSc in Analytics, MS in Computer Science, MS in Statistics, MS in Financial Math, MS in Computational Analysis & Public Policy, MS in Biomedical Informatics, MS in Computational Social Science, and quantitative doctoral programs.

GRADUCon

GRADUCon is the University's annual spring career conference for graduate students, postdocs, and recent graduate alumni. The event features a full day of distinguished guest speakers, panel discussions, and informal networking sessions. This includes a panel on the U.S. Job Search for International Students and Postdocs, with a mini-workshop (20 minutes) on job search tips and work visa authorization options. The panel is usually comprised of three or four alumni from different countries who share their perspectives on gaining employment in the U.S.

Employer Information Sessions

UChicagoGRAD hosts employers for on-campus interviews and information sessions. Employers are also invited to hold webinars and virtual interviews. Together, these opportunities enable you to get to know a variety of organizations and their opportunities.

Please visit this page at **grad.uchicago.edu/uchicagograd-student-postdoc-recruiting-expectations** to review guidelines that will help you navigate recruiting processes and conduct yourself professionally.

Fellowship Resources

Fellowships are competitive monetary awards intended to support academic, artistic, or other professional pursuits. The fellowships listed here may be relevant for incoming Masters students. You may find it useful to schedule a fellowship advising meeting to further explore opportunities if you (1) are interested in the opportunities below, (2) will be enrolled at UChicago longer than four academic quarters, or (3) plan to pursue a PhD immediately after your MA. Note that most fellowship application deadlines fall nine to twelve months prior to the start of an opportunity.

INTL= Open to int'l students	**ABROAD**= Int'l experience
LANG= Language traning	**PROF**=Professional experience

Professional Experience

- Arts Student Creativity Grants (INTL) – Rolling
- Data Science for Social Good (INTL, PROF) – Jan.
- Graduate Council Travel Grants (INTL) – Rolling
- Herbert Scoville Jr. Peace Fellowship (PROF, INTL) – Oct., Jan.
- Google Public Policy Fellowship (INTL, PROF) – Mar.
- Graduate Global Impact Internship (PROF, INTL) – Feb.

International Or Language Fellowships

- Global Health Corps Fellowship (INTL, ABROAD, PROF) – Jan.
- Institute of Current World Affairs (ABROAD, INTL) – Mar. or June
- International Innovation Corps in India (INTL, ABROAD, PROF) – Jan.
- Middlebury Davis Fellowship for Peace (LANG, INTL) – Dec.
- Schwarzman Scholars for Masters of Global Affairs, Tsinghua University (ABROAD, INTL) – Sept.

Educational Scholarships

- Davis Putter Scholarship in Social Justice (INTL) – Apr.
- Knight-Hennessy Scholars for graduate study at Stanford (INTL) – Sept.
- National Association of Social Workers Fellowship (INTL) – Mar.

One-On-One Advising

UChicagoGRAD provides one-on-one fellowship advising to MA and PhD students in all divisions and schools. Our office can help you prepare for a particular fellowship competition or identify funding opportunities suited to your research and professional goals. Use **GRAD Gargoyle** at **grad-uchicago-csm.symplicity.com** to set up a meeting.

Statement Editing

UChicagoGRAD's Fellowship Proposal Specialist reviews written fellowship application materials (via e-mail), including research, personal history, and diversity statements. You can request review up to ten business days prior to your deadline at **grad.uchicago.edu/fellowships/writing-support**.

Fellowship Database

This database features hundreds of funding opportunities searchable by field, research topic, demographics, and citizenship. Begin your search **here**.

Fellowship Listserv

Receive weekly emails with fellowship/grant announcements and deadline reminders. Subscribe with your CNET ID **here**.

Information Sessions

UChicagoGRAD offers year-round information sessions and workshops on specific fellowships. Stay up to date with UChicagoGRAD programs at **grad.uchicago.edu/event-calendar**.

Writing Workshops

UChicagoGRAD hosts peer-review writing workshops for students applying to the same fellowship; register for using **GRAD Gargoyle** at **grad-uchicago-csm.symplicity.com**.

The Broader Impacts of Your Research

UChicagoGRAD has compiled a list of opportunities to help students and postdocs connect with their community, promote training and learning, broaden interest in their research or field, and disseminate the importance of their work. Learn more at **grad.uchicago.edu/fellowships/uchicago-research-connections**.

Section 4

Employer Guide to Hiring International Students

UChicago international students come from over 90 different countries and pursue a diverse array of degrees and career goals. International students bring diversity, adaptability, global perspectives, and international connections to employers. Hiring a UChicago international student is an excellent way to bring some of the world's best talent to your organization. The many benefits of hiring international students include:

- Broadening the diversity of perspectives within your teams through expanded cultural understanding
- Enhancing your economic, scientific, and technological competitiveness through increased diversity in research initiatives, innovation, and knowledge
- Increasing understanding and knowledge of global markets
- Utilizing the social capital and network of your employees for the benefit of your organization

Source: **internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/employer-guide-hiring-international-students**

Section Topics
UChicagoGRAD Employer Relations
Employing International Students
U.S. Work Authorization Chart

UChicagoGRAD Employer Relations

With more than 100 graduate programs and a 125-year history of providing advanced training across disciplines, the University of Chicago attracts some of the most talented students and postdocs in the world. There are several options for employers wishing to connect with UChicago talent:

- Post jobs and internships on **GRAD Gargoyle**, a job board specifically for UChicago graduate students and postdocs
- Host an on-campus or virtual information session for graduate students and/or postdocs
- Attend and/or sponsor one of our annual career events (GRADFair, GRADUCon, and/or the Data Science and Business Analytics Career Fair); learn more at **grad.uchicago.edu/career-development/for-employers**
- Interview trainees virtually or on UChicago's campus
- Allow us to create a custom package of offerings that meet your hiring objectives

To begin working with us, register as an employer in **GRAD Gargoyle**. If you have questions about options for employers, please contact GRAD Employer Relations at **hireGRAD@uchicago.edu**.

Employer Information Sessions

UChicagoGRAD welcomes employers to campus for information sessions, tech talks, and panel discussions. These opportunities enable you to get to know students and postdocs from across the disciplines and share information about your organization, such as your open roles, company culture, and recruitment timelines and processes. Employer information sessions that target graduate students and postdocs usually attract between 15-30 candidates and last 60-90 minutes. UChicagoGRAD plans all logistics, including room scheduling and event promotion. We invite employers who would like to present remotely to be in touch, as well. Info sessions can be planned in conjunction with interviews, or they can be standalone events.

On-campus and Virtual Interviews

Employers are invited to hold formal interviews or informal, informational coffee chats with interested graduate students and postdocs. UChicagoGRAD can also assist in facilitating virtual interview opportunities. We can promote virtual or on-campus interview opportunities to targeted group of students and postdocs, and we can collect required materials (résumés, statements of interest) from applicants and deliver them digitally for your review.

Employing International Students

(source: **internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/employer-guide-hiring-international-students**)

International students are required to obtain a student visa to pursue their degree or exchange program in the United States. Like most universities, the University of Chicago currently sponsors two types of non-immigrant student statuses:

- **F-1 Student Status.** This is for non-immigrant students working towards a specific degree (e.g. BA, MA, PhD, MD) and some exchange programs. Documents for these students include form I-20, F-1 visa, I-94 card or Electronic I-94 record, and Admission Stamp.
- **J-1 Student Status.** This non-immigrant status is used for international exchange. Documents for these students include form DS-2019, J-1 visa, I-94 card or Electronic I-94 record, and Admission Stamp.

A common misconception about international students is that they are not allowed to work—that is simply not true! In fact, a benefit of the F-1 and J-1 statuses is that most students may apply for work authorization to accept a variety of employment opportunities. Best of all, it is possible for students to begin working without their employers having to provide visa sponsorship. However, some work authorization types do require an application to the government or the student's international office at their university. Below, we have provided a brief overview of the types of work authorization available to F-1 and J-1 students.

F-1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT is a type of F-1 work authorization that allows students to work off campus in cases in which the employment will (1) fulfill a requirement of the student's degree program, (2) fulfill the requirement of a student's UChicago course, or (3) is part of an established co-operative educational agreement between a UChicago department and the employer. CPT eligibility requirements are quite strict and cannot be adjusted based on a student's particular circumstances. However, many UChicago degree programs provide some kind of CPT option.

Characteristics of CPT:

- No employer sponsorship is needed, but the application does require the employer to provide a CPT letter
- Students must be enrolled full time for one academic year before they can apply
- CPT can only be used before a student completes their degree/graduates
- The application is initiated by the student, processed by OIA, and takes approximately one week to approve
- It allows part-time and full-time work, depending on the time of year
- The student must have an offer before they can apply

Employer Responsibilities

When students apply for CPT, they will be required to submit a CPT employer letter. This letter is crucial to authorizing CPT, and we strongly recommend that employers use the **CPT employer letter template** to ensure all required information is included and to prevent CPT processing delays.

Approval

Once all documents are received, it will take approximately one week for OIA to authorize a student's CPT. CPT approval comes in the form of a new form I-20, which will detail the employment authorization on page 2. The form I-20 may be copied for human resources purposes; however, the student is required to carry the original.

IMPORTANT: Students are NOT permitted to begin their off-campus employment until their work authorization has been approved and the start date has been reached. Working even one day without proper work authorization can have severe consequences on a student's immigration status and for the company.

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is a type of F-1 off-campus work authorization for degree-seeking students who wish to gain experience in jobs directly related to their major area of study.

Characteristics of OPT:

- No employer sponsorship is needed
- Students must be enrolled for one year before applying for OPT
- OPT may be used *before or after* a student completes their degree; OPT acquired *before* degree completion is referred to as Pre-completion OPT, while OPT acquired *after* degree completion is referred to as Post-completion OPT
- The application is initiated by the student, authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and can take several months to be approved (processing times may vary throughout the year and can be found on the USCIS website). USCIS does not expedite applications
- It allows part-time and full-time work; students on Post-completion OPT are required to work at least 20 hours per week
- Eligible students have a maximum of 12 months of OPT; students who have earned a degree in a **STEM-designated field** may be eligible for an additional 24 months under the **OPT STEM Extension**
- A job offer is NOT required for application
- Students must work in a job that is directly related to their degree program

Employer Responsibilities

Employers can choose to have little to no involvement with the OPT application process; however, students are required to report general employment information to OIA and may request an Employment Verification Letter for travel purposes. STEM OPT carries additional employer requirements.

Approval

OPT approval comes in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). This card will state the specific start and end dates for OPT.

IMPORTANT: Students are NOT permitted to begin their employment until their work authorization has been approved. Working even one day without proper work authorization can have severe consequences on the student's immigration status. **Students on OPT must wait until they have received their EAD before they can begin working and before they can apply for a Social Security Number.**

F-1 STEM OPT Extension

F-1 students who have earned a degree in a **STEM-designated field** may be eligible to apply for an additional 24 months of OPT through the STEM Extension.

Characteristics of the STEM OPT Extension:

- No employer sponsorship is needed; however, employers must be highly involved in training and are responsible for completing the I-983 Training Plan and multiple follow-up progress reports (see employer responsibilities at **internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/employer-guide-hiring-international-students#Employer%20Responsibilities**)
- STEM OPT can only be used *after* a student completes their initial 12 months of "regular" OPT (**internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/employer-guide-hiring-international-students#F-1%20Optional%20Practical%20Training%20(OPT)**)
- The application is initiated by the student, authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and can take several months to be approved (processing times may vary throughout the year)
- The application must be received by USCIS before the regular OPT expiration date; students must list the employer's E-verify number on the STEM OPT application
- Students may apply for the STEM OPT extension no sooner than 90 days prior to the current EAD expiration date
- Students must work at least 20 hours per week in a position that directly relates to their STEM degree
- Students must be compensated for their work; volunteer work is not permitted under the OPT STEM extension
- Students must have a job offer from an E-Verify employer (**uscis.gov/e-verify/about-program/e-verify-employers-search-tool**)

Employer Responsibilities

Although the program's various reporting requirements predominately apply to students and sponsoring schools, there are instances in which employers must assist in tracking STEM OPT students and their practical training progress.

The employer's responsibilities for a student's STEM OPT include:

- **E-Verify.** The STEM OPT employer must be enrolled in the **E-Verify program**.
- **Compensation.** The STEM OPT student's compensation must be commensurate with the pay of a U.S. citizen with the same credentials in a similar position.
- **I-983 Training Plan.** The student's direct supervisor must review and sign off on the student's I-983 training plan.
- **Changes to I-983 Training Plan.** The direct supervisor must review and sign off on a new I-983 training plan if there are any material changes to the student's job (e.g. supervisor name, compensation).
- **Student Self-Evaluations.** The student is required to complete two self-evaluations to monitor progress and report on educational goals: one at the mid-point of employment, and one at the end. The student's direct supervisor must review and sign off on these self-evaluations, as needed.
- **Loss or Termination of Employment.** The employer must notify OIA when the student's employment is terminated for any reason before the end of the authorized OPT extension period. This report must occur within five business days of the end of employment and can be sent via email to **international-affairs@uchicago.edu**.
- **DHS Site Visits.** STEM OPT regulations authorize the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to visit employers who have hired STEM OPT students to confirm that the student is adhering to the training plan on record. In most cases, DHS will provide notice to the employer at least 48 hours in advance of any site visit. For more information, please refer to the **Study in The States webpage**.

Employers are expected to review and sign-off on training plans and evaluations in a timely manner, but it is the student's responsibility to keep such documentation up to date and request review of the I-983, if needed. To learn more about the employer responsibilities listed above, please visit the **Study in the States** website of the Dept. of Homeland Security at **studyinthestates. dhs.gov/employers-stem-opt-reporting-requirements**.

Approval

STEM OPT approval comes in the form of a new Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

H-1B OPT CAP-GAP Extension

The "H-1B Cap-Gap Extension" refers to the period of time between the end of a student's F-1 status (end of OPT or the grace period) and the beginning of the student's H-1B status (October 1). The OPT Cap-Gap extension only applies for students submitting a Change of Status petition (not consular processing) for cap-subject employers.

If a student has an H-1B application pending with or approved by USCIS before the end of their OPT authorization, the Cap-Gap extension rule automatically extends an eligible F-1 student's OPT authorization during this "gap" period until the H-1B status becomes active (October 1).

Eligibility

This extension is available to F-1 students whose OPT was approved or who

- Have an OPT end date on or after April 1 of the current year *and*
- Have a pending or approved Change of Status H-1B petition (I-539) with USCIS
- Filed the H-1B petition in a timely manner with USCIS, according to the acceptance period *and*
- Work for an employer who is subject to the H-1B cap (is not exempt from the cap)

In most cases, USCIS automatically adds the cap-gap extension to the records of students who are eligible. If a student believes the cap-gap should be added to their record, they should contact their OIA advisor at **internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/about-contact** for more information.

J-1 Academic Training

Academic Training (AT) is an off-campus authorization that allows J-1 students to work in jobs and internships that are directly related to their degree programs. Students must work with their academic departments and their school's international office to apply for AT.

Characteristics of Academic Training:

- No employer sponsorship is needed, but the application will require a letter from the employer (see **Employer Responsibilities**)
- The student must have a job offer before they can apply
- AT may be used before or after a student completes their degree; AT acquired *before* degree completion is referred to as Pre-completion Academic Training, while AT acquired *after* degree completion is referred to as Post-completion Academic Training
- The application is initiated by the student, processed by OIA, and takes approximately one week to approve
- It allows part-time and full-time work

- Post-completion Academic Training requires that the student be compensated for their work; if they will not be compensated, they should contact OIA to discuss other ways to prove financial ability to remain in the U.S. while on AT
- Doctoral students may be eligible for up to 36 months of authorization, while Bachelors and Masters students are eligible for up to 18 months or the length of their program, whichever is shorter

Employer Responsibilities

When students apply for AT, they will be required to submit a "job offer letter." This letter is crucial to authorizing AT, and we strongly recommend that employers use the **AT employer letter template** to make sure all required information is included and to prevent AT processing delays.

Approval

Once all documents are received, it will take approximately 1 week for OIA to authorize a student's AT. AT approval comes in the form of a new DS-2019 which will detail the employment authorization on the first page. The form DS-2019 may be copied for human resources purposes; however, the student is required to carry the original.

IMPORTANT: Students are NOT permitted to begin their employment until their work authorization has been approved. Working even one day without proper work authorization can have severe consequences on the student's immigration status.

Other Types of Work Visas

Please note the information below is not intended to serve as legal advice; it is for informational purposes only. Content is subject to change. Employers are advised to consult with an experienced immigration attorney or area hiring professional with any additional questions.

Federal regulations require that a student end their employment once their practical or academic training has expired. However, in some cases, students in F-1 or J-1 status may be eligible to apply for a change of status to a work visa, such as the H-1B or TN visa.

H-1B visas are granted to foreign nationals who will work in "specialty occupations." A specialty occupation requires theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge to fully perform the required duties. Specialty occupations require a BA or higher degree in a specific field as a minimum for entry into the occupation. The H-1B application is employer based, meaning only the employer can sponsor an individual for H-1B status.

Please note: The OIA is not able to advise students on visa types outside of the F-1 and J-1 status. Employers can find more information on work visa types on the **USCIS website**. Students are also encouraged to consult with an immigration attorney (if possible) when applying for their change of status.

U.S. Work Authorization Chart

	Process	Employer Requirements	Timing	Cost
Curricular Practical Training (CPT) **F-1 Visa Holders**	CPT can be undertaken prior to completion of study. Student applies for approval from their host institution. Students can request to work: Part time - maximum of 20 hours/week while school is in session (there may be exceptions) Full time - when school is not in session (21 hours or more/week)	Provide offer letter and/or other job specifications	Approval takes approximately 1 week.	No cost to employer or student
Optional Practical Training (OPT) **F-1 Visa Holders**	Can be authorized for full-time employment after completion of studies (definition of completion varies by degree level) Student files OPT application with their host institution. Approval is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Student must obtain Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) prior to starting work.	None Student must present EAD card to employer on the first day of work as proof of authorization.	Approval can take several months. Processing times may vary throughout the year and can be found on the USCIS website.	No cost to employer $410 paid by student
Academic Training **J-1 Visa Holders**	AT can be done before and after completion of study. Student applies for approval from their host institution. Students are eligible to work anywhere from 18 to 36 months depending on length of study.	None	Approval takes approximately 1 week.	No cost to employer
H-1B Visas	H-1B temporary worker nonimmigrant status is designated for individuals coming temporarily to the U.S. to perform services in a specialty occupation. 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)	Sponsorship is required for H-1B visa filing. Link to USCIS site which explains the employer requirement and steps needed to file **H-1B petition**	Varies depending on the employer. The rules allow H-1B petition to be filed 6 months in advance of H-1B start date.	Filing fees for H-1B petition can be found at **uscis.gov/forms/h-and-l-filingfees-form-i-129-petitionnonimmigrant-worker**