

## **Working in the US**

International students admitted to US universities normally hold either F-1 (student) or J-1 (exchange visitor) visas. F-1 and J-1 students are generally eligible for some type of student work authorization upon completion of their studies. These types of work authorization allow the students to work in their field of study upon completion of the degree program for a limited time frame, provided they receive the necessary authorization before beginning employment. The amount of time for each type of work authorization and authorization procedures vary according to the student's immigration status and on whether or not they used any of this work authorization while still a student.

Students can find out more about these types of work authorization by contacting the International Student Service Office (ISSO). It is the student's responsibility to be knowledgeable about their eligibility for authorization and to provide information to the employer where necessary.

### **Optional Practical Training for F-1 Students**

F-1 students are eligible to be employed for 12 months in their field of study for "Optional Practical Training". Note that these 12 months need not be continuous - for example, a student may work for three months at an internship during his/her first summer and then for nine months after graduation. To apply for this type of training, a student does not need to have a specific position. Requirements for employment include:

- The job must be directly related to the student's field of study.
- The job may take place anywhere in the U.S.
- The job must be appropriate for the student's level of education.
- The student must have had student status for at least nine months prior to employment.

It is the student's responsibility to apply for employment authorization before starting to work. The two steps students need to go through in order to receive work authorization are:

1. Recommendation from Foreign Student Advisor
2. Authorization from Immigration Services

A student's permission to begin Optional Practical Training is not finalized until he/she has received an "Employment Authorization Document" (EAD) from the INS. The application process through the INS can take anywhere between 30 to 90 days, so students are encouraged to apply early. For Practical Training after completion of the degree, students must submit their application for authorization during the period between 120 days before and 60 days after the completion of the program of study.

## Academic Training for J1 Students

While some J-1 students are subject to a "two-year home residency requirement", other J-1 students are not subject to the same requirements. Students who are subject to the requirement cannot switch to most types of work visas without first returning to their home country for two years. J-1 students who are not subject to the two-year rule or who receive a waiver of that requirement would be eligible to switch to more permanent work visas. J-1 students are encouraged to find out for sure (by consulting with the foreign student advisor) whether they are or are not subject to the requirement, so that they can advise employers correctly about their eligibility for permanent employment.

J-1 academic training can last up to 18 months, or 36 months for post-doctoral training for Ph.D. candidates. Students must have a specific job offer to apply for Academic Training. Requirements for J-1 Academic Training include:

- Student is in the U.S. primarily to study.
- Student is in good academic standing.
- Employment is directly related to student's field of study.
- Student must maintain permission to remain in the U.S. in J-1 student status.
- Student must receive written approval in advance.
- Employment after completion of studies must involve paid employment.

It is the student's responsibility to apply for employment authorization before starting to work. Students need to go through three main steps in order to receive work authorization:

1. Obtain letter of offer from prospective employer. The letter must include:
  - Job title
  - Description of "goals and objectives" of the "training program" (the employment)
  - Dates and location of employment
  - Number of hours per week
  - Name and address of supervisor
2. Give employer letter to academic advisor or dean for them to write a recommendation. The recommendation must include:
  - Goals and objectives of specific training program
  - Description of training program (dates and location, supervisor name and address, number of hours per week)
  - How the training relates to the student's major field of study
  - Why the training is an integral or critical part of the academic program of the student
3. Give academic recommendation to J-1 Responsible Officer to evaluate the proposed training program and write a letter of approval.

For Academic Training after completion of the degree, the deadline for students to submit their application for authorization is 30 days after the completion of the program of study or by the end date on their DS-2019 form, whichever is sooner.

All employees, including international students, must complete the I-9 "Employment Eligibility Verification" form. This is simply a record that the employer has verified the identity and legal employment eligibility of every person hired.

More information on visas/work permits can be obtained from the WorkPermit website at [www.workpermit.com/us/employer.htm](http://www.workpermit.com/us/employer.htm)