Hiring International Students

SOCHE
Strategic Ohio Council for Higher Education

Employing international students can bring new perspectives and diversity to your business. Most of the paperwork needed to hire an international student is completed by the student's college or university and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

Can You Employ an International Student?

International students obtain a student visa to pursue a degree or exchange program in the United States. These visas allow students to work in jobs related to their **major** field of study.

Most educational institutions sponsor two types of non-immigrant student statuses, F-1 and J-1. The F-1 visa allows students to accept employment for "practical training," under certain conditions. The J-1 visa is used for the Exchange Visitor Programs administered by the Department of State (DOS).

Internships

Students, in general, must have completed one academic year (fall/spring semester) in F-1 status and must maintain their F-1 status to be eligible for employment. There are two types of internships, CPT and OPT. Students are responsible for ensuring their paperwork is completed by their institution and provided to their employer.

Do You Know An International Student Who Is Interested In A Work-Based Experience?

Have them contact their college or university's International Education Department to find out if they are eligible for employment. Each institution has different policies related to curricular-related employment.

For F-1 students, any off-campus training employment must be related to their area of study and must be authorized prior to starting any work by the Designated School Official (DSO) at their school who is authorized to maintain the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)) and USCIS. The employer will supply an offer letter to confirm the employment needed for the required Form I-20 completion.

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CPT – Curricular Practical Training

CPT training will be authorized by the educational institution (not USCIS) for F-1 students participating in an internship program. The college or university Designated School Official (DSO) will be the contact for any questions regarding CPT. It is important to note that international students on F-1 visas are eligible for CPT before finishing their studies, as well as 12 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT). Students who work full-time with a CPT for one year (12 months) or more are not eligible for OPT. CPT training must be completed before graduation, while OPT training can be completed before or after graduation.

OPT – Optional Practical Training

OPT training must be authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) with a recommendation from the college/university DSO which issued the I-20 for the CPT. Students are eligible for 12 months of OPT for each degree level. Students who have received OPT permission must apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) by the USCIS. Students who have an OPT internship in STEM-related fields may be eligible for the OPT STEM Extension.

OPT STEM Extension (after the 12-month OPT)

Students who obtain a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) may be eligible for an additional 24 months of OPT. Students who are participating in OPT training and have a pending STEM extension application can continue working for up to 180 days while the application is pending.

More information

F-1 Student Visa

J-1 Exchange Visitor

CPT Curricular Practical Training

OPT Optional Practical Training

OPT STEM Extension

USCIS

DSO

I-20

Employer Responsibilities when hosting an International SOCHE intern

- Work with the SOCHE Program Manager who will provide an offer letter to the college or university that the international student attends and provide information for reports.

Hiring International Students
for successful internships

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J-1 Academic Training

The J-1 Visa Student Exchange Program is a way for businesses to bring in international talent for specific jobs or internships. The program promotes cultural exchange by allowing international students and professionals to work in the U.S. for a limited time. Businesses must be approved by the U.S. Department of State to host J-1 participants and provide appropriate training and supervision, facilitate cultural integration, and comply with the rules of the program.

To ensure a successful internship for you and your interns, your organization should do the following.

ONBOARDING Provide an orientation program that introduces interns to your organization, its culture, and their specific roles.

INCLUSIVITY Promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment where interns feel like they are part of the team.

OPEN COMMUNICATION Encourage open and transparent communication to address any concerns or issues that arise. It is important that you also communicate with the SOCHE Program Manager assigned to your organization. If there are internship issues, the program manager may be able to help resolve issues before they become problems.

Effective communication is crucial to ensuring successful internships. Here are some key steps that can contribute to the positive performance of interns:

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS Set clear objectives and expectations for the internship, including goals and performance metrics set forth by the intern's position description.

REGULAR FEEDBACK Offer regular feedback and support to help interns understand their strengths and areas for improvement. The Host Organization Supervisor should continuously monitor the intern's progress and provide regular feedback to them on their performance and behavior.

MENTORSHIP Assign mentors or buddies to help interns navigate the organization and provide guidance.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT Provide relevant training and opportunities for skill development to help interns excel in their roles. Encourage your interns to complete the online SOCHE Professional Development.

For more information about internships, contact soche@soche.org