

**STEM OPT
(Science, Technology, Engineering,
Mathematics)**

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**.

Other characteristics of the STEM OPT Extension:

- STEM OPT can only be used after a student completes their initial 12 months of “regular” OPT.
- No employer sponsorship needed. However, employers must be highly involved in training and are responsible for completing the I-983 Training Plan. Two follow-up evaluation reports are required.
- Application is initiated by the student along with the employer’s input and assistance. Final authorization is approved by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and takes 3-5 months to be approved. Application must be received by USCIS before regular OPT expiration date.
- Students must have job offer from an E-Verify employer. 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.

F-1 OPT & STEM OPT Approval

F-1 OPT and STEM OPT approvals comes in the form of an **Employment Authorization Document (EAD)**. This card will state the specific start and end dates for the practical training.



Employer Responsibilities

Although the program’s various reporting requirements predominately apply to students and sponsoring schools, there are instances where 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 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 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 these self-evaluations, as needed.
- **Loss or Termination of Employment:** The employer must notify CIE when the student’s employment is terminated for any reason before the end of the authorized STEM OPT period. This report must occur within five business days of the end of employment and can be sent via email to *international@xavier.edu*.

- **Student Responsibility:** Employers are expected to review and sign 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.

- **DHS Site Visits:** STEM OPT regulations authorize the Dept. 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 on STEM OPT, please refer to the Study in The States webpage: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/employers-stem-opt-reporting-requirements>.

J-1 Academic Training (AT)

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 have to work with their academic departments and the CIE to apply for AT.

Other characteristics of Academic Training:

- No employer sponsorship needed, but the application will require a letter from the employer.
- Student must have a job offer before they can apply.
- AT may be used before or after a student completes their degree.
- Application is initiated by the student, is processed by the CIE and takes approximately 1 week to approve.
- 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 come to the CIE 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**. Exchange students are eligible for AT corresponding to the amount of time in their program (e.g., 90 days of study = 90 days of AT eligibility).

Once all documents are received, it will take approximately 3-5 days for CIE to authorize the student’s AT. The 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 original should be returned to the student.

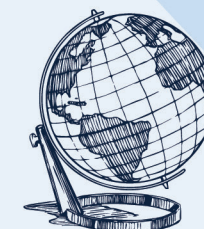
IMPORTANT: Students are NOT permitted to begin their employment until their work authorization has been approved. Working even one day without proper work authorization can have severe consequences for the student’s immigration status.

Other Work Visas

Federal regulations require that a student ends 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 bachelor’s or higher degree in a specific field as a minimum for entry in to the occupation. The H-1B application is employer-based, and requires the employer’s sponsorship to apply for the H-1B status.

IMPORTANT: Xavier does not provide advice beyond the F-1 and J-1 student visa statuses. We encourage all Employers to find more information on work visa types on the USCIS.gov website. Employers and students are also encouraged to consult with an experienced immigration attorney when applying for their change of status to a work visa.



**EMPLOYER GUIDE
TO HIRING
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**



HIRE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Why Hire International Students?

Higher education is one of the largest hidden “imports” of our nation. The US is host to over 1 million international students from all over the world. International students studying at US colleges and universities contribute over \$39 billion into our economy and support more than 455,000 US jobs (NAFSA.org, 2019). International students contribute academically, culturally, and financially into our local communities and remind us just how globally interconnected we are.

We hope you will consider becoming an international student friendly business/organization and consider hiring international students to work for you in the future. Hiring an international student is an excellent way to bring some of the world's best talent to your organization.

Benefits of hiring international students:

- Broadening the diversity of ideas and perspectives of your teams through enhanced cultural understanding in a global market;
- Enhancing your economic, scientific and technological competitiveness through increased diversity in research, innovation and knowledge;
- Increasing understanding and knowledge of markets in students' home countries and utilizing networks of such employees for the benefit of your organization.

We hope this guide will serve as a helpful resource for any off-campus employers curious about hiring international students. The Center for International Education (CIE) works with Xavier University's international students. We look forward to being a resource to you and your Human Resources department about hiring Xavier's international students.



What is Work Authorization?

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 status 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, the work authorizations do require an application to the student's international office at their school and/or to the government's United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), also formerly known as INS. The following is a brief overview of the different types of work authorization available to F-1 and J-1 international students.



What is the F-1 or J-1 Visa?

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

F-1 Student Status – 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 – Non-immigrant status 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.

F-1 Work Authorization

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT is a type of F-1 work authorization that allows students to work off campus in cases where the employment will fulfill:

- 1) a requirement of the student's degree program,
- 2) a requirement of a student's course, or
- 3) is part of an established internship or co-operative educational agreement between the academic department and the employer.

Other characteristics of CPT:

- No employer sponsorship needed.
- Student must have a job offer before they can apply.
- Allows part-time and full-time work.
- The CPT application requires the employer to sign the application form and attach an employment offer letter detailing the job title, responsibilities, work location, hours of work per week, and dates of the employment period.
- Students must be enrolled full-time for one academic year before they are eligible to apply for CPT.
- CPT can only be used before a student completes their degree/graduates.

- Application is initiated by the student and takes CIE approximately 3-5 days to review and approve.

- The CPT Approval comes in the form of a new form I-20 with the detail the employment authorization above. You may make a copy for Human Resources purposes however, please return the original I-20 to the student.

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.

Other Characteristics of OPT:

- No employer sponsorship needed.
- Students must be enrolled for one year to be eligible for OPT.
- Eligible students have a maximum of 12 months of OPT.
- Students must work in a job that is directly related to their degree program.
- OPT may be used before or after a student completes their degree.
 - o OPT acquired *before* degree completion is referred to as **Pre-completion OPT**.
 - o OPT acquired *after* degree completion is referred to as **Post-completion OPT**.
- Job offer is NOT required to apply for OPT.
- Allows part-time and full-time work; students on Post-completion OPT are required to work at least 20 hours per week.
- Application is initiated by the student and is authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). It can take 3 -5 months to be approved. USCIS does not expedite applications.
- Students who have earned a degree in a STEM-designated field may be eligible for an additional 24 months under the OPT STEM Extension.

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



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

MISSION

The Center for International Education (CIE) collaboratively leads internationalization efforts and fosters intercultural understanding for students, scholars, faculty and staff. In support of Xavier's mission to prepare students to live in a global society, we provide resources on best practices within international education and coordinate the development of programs and opportunities for learning and growth across cultures.

Through our Center, we facilitate students to accomplish the following:

- Students will be successful and adaptable in non-native environments.
- Students will be accepting and inclusive of multiple cultural perspectives.
- Students will be interculturally competent.
- Students will be globally aware and engaged.

For more information and any additional questions, contact us:

- Phone: (513) 745 - 2864
- Email: international@xavier.edu
- Website: xavier.edu/international, or
- Visit us at Xavier: Gallagher Student Center, Room 230

