

NORTHWESTERN EMPLOYER GUIDE: HIRING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students account for **23%** of Northwestern's full-time student population, and bring a wealth of talent and diverse perspectives. Northwestern international students and their dependents contributed nearly **\$1.6 billion** to the Illinois economy in 2017-2018, and international students more broadly contribute significantly to national, state, and local economies across the United States.

Hiring a Northwestern international student in your organization can provide:



Diverse Perspectives

Northwestern international students come from over 100+ countries, providing them with unique and diverse perspectives to bring to organizations where they work.



Global Competency

Northwestern international students have cross-cultural communication skills, multilingual language abilities, and international networks from their home countries, all of which contribute to an enhanced global competency.



Adaptability

Northwestern international students have traveled from their home country to live and study in the U.S., providing them with the ability to be flexible in new environments, and persist in the face of challenges.

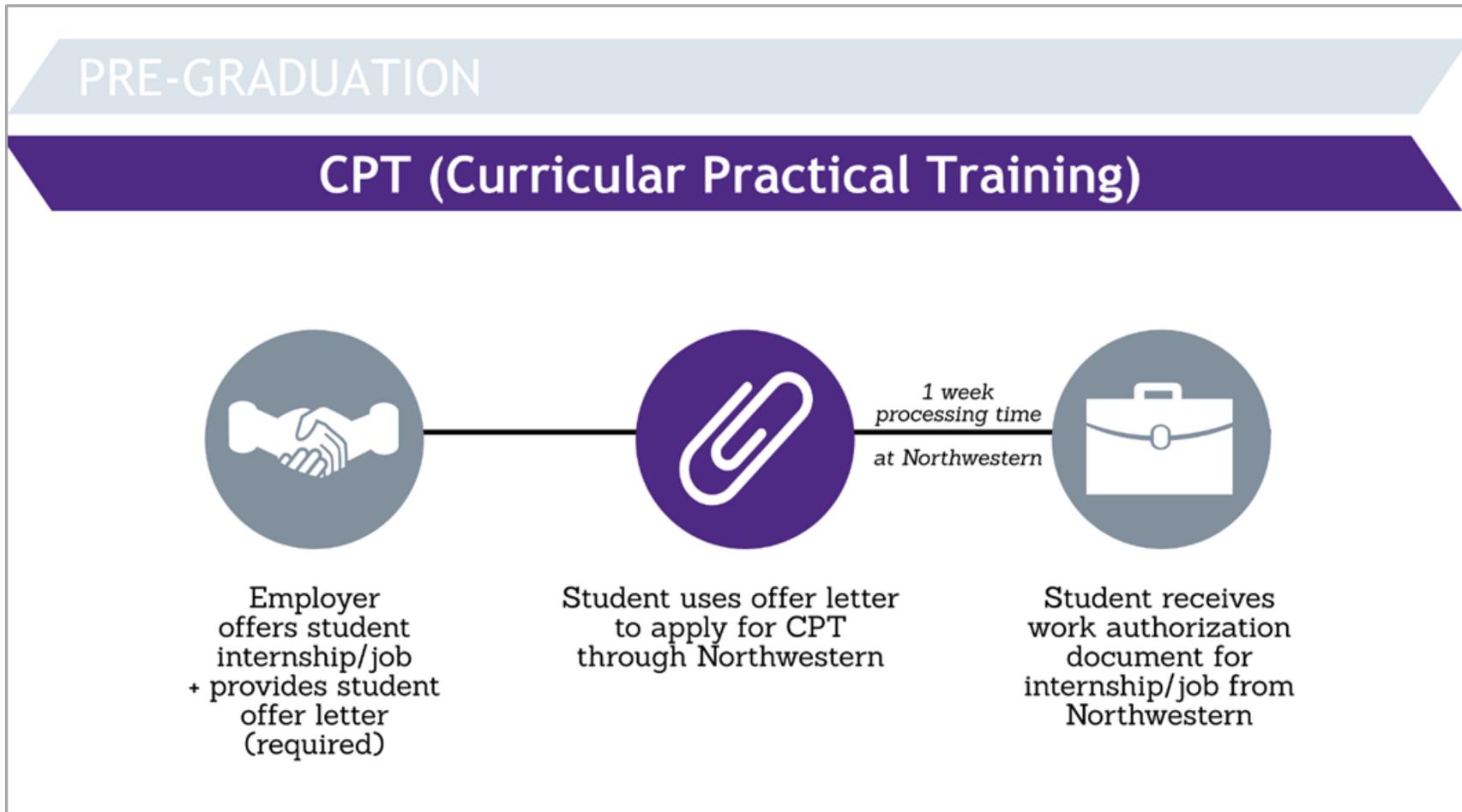


Specialized Skills

Northwestern international students can be found in a wide range of degree programs within the university, enhancing their skills in fields such as economics, engineering, journalism, political science, and many more.

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Hiring an International Student for an Internship (Prior to Graduation):



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Frequently Asked Questions (Hiring Prior to Graduation)

➤ **Is it legal to hire an international student to work as an intern while they are still in school (prior to graduation)?**

Yes. Federal regulations ([8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(10\)\(i\)](#)) permit students on an international student F-1 visa to work in jobs related to their field of study using Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Students can work up to 12 months full-time (20+ hours/week) on CPT. Approximately **746 Northwestern International students** were hired under CPT in 2017 – 2018.

CPT is granted per quarter/semester. Current regulations also allow job offers to span more than one quarter/semester, but students should confirm their eligibility for a longer internship with Northwestern's Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISS). Students who are eligible for CPT can work for a maximum of 12 months, though their ability to use the full 12 months may depend on their academic program. Some students will also use OPT, which can provide an additional 12 months of work authorization, but most students will not use OPT until after they graduate (see "Hiring for Post-Graduation" below).

➤ **What type of paperwork and cost is involved in hiring an international student?**

The employer does not need to incur any additional costs to hire an international student using CPT, and Northwestern University's Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISS) will manage the relevant paperwork. The only thing that a company will need to produce is an offer letter containing a few key details about the student's internship. Specifically, the offer letter needs to be written on company letterhead and include the student's start date, end date, hours per week, and the address of the work location.

➤ **What other considerations are there?**

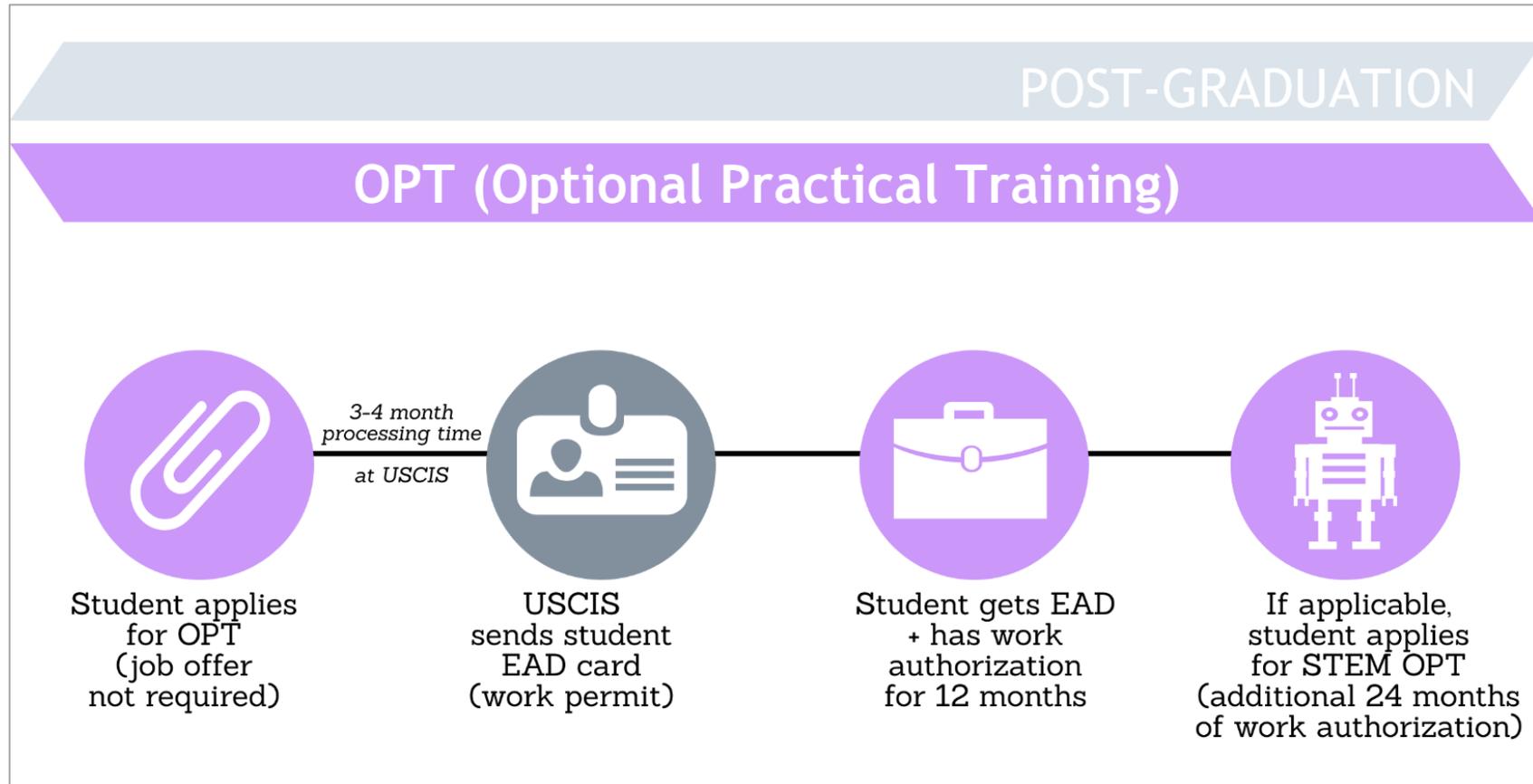
Generally, international students must have completed at least 9 months of their degree program before doing an internship. During academic (non-summer) quarters, international students generally must work less than 20 hours per week, though there may be exceptions that allow for full-time work during an academic quarter depending on the student's academic program. This means that most international students are still eligible to do a full-time summer internship, and possibly part-time internships during academic quarters. Students can check with Northwestern's OISS to verify their eligibility.

➤ **What does the hiring process look like if the student is on a J-1 Visitor Visa instead of an F-1 Student Visa?**

Students on a J-1 visitor visa can work under a program called "academic training," which may allow them to work part-time during their program of study. Students can check with Northwestern's OISS to verify their eligibility.

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Hiring an International Student for a Job Post-Graduation



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Frequently Asked Questions (Hiring For Post-Graduation)¹

➤ **Is it legal to hire an international student to work after they have graduated?**

Yes. All students on an F-1 student visa are eligible for 12 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT), which can be used following graduation ([8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(11\)\(i\)\(B\)\(1\)](#)). Approximately **1,272 Northwestern International students** were hired under OPT in 2017 – 2018.

Students who completed a BS, MS, or PhD in a STEM field are eligible for an additional 24 months of STEM OPT with an E-Verify employer, which makes them eligible for a potential total of 3 years of work authorization under OPT. You can read more about E-Verify in the “Glossary of Terms” section below. STEM OPT requires one additional form completed by the student’s supervisor and comes at no additional cost to the employer.

➤ **What type of paperwork and cost is involved in hiring an international student?**

Northwestern University’s Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISS) will manage the relevant paperwork. The employer does not need to incur any additional costs to hire an international student using OPT. The only thing that a company will need to produce is an offer letter containing a few key details about the student’s full-time job. The offer letter the company produces needs to be written on company letterhead and include the student’s start date, end date, hours per week, and the address of the work location.

➤ **At what point should an employer seek outside counsel for international student employment sponsorship?**

With advanced planning, an employer can pursue an H-1B visa or other visa options to allow international students to continue to work for them after their post-graduate OPT period has ended. Employers should plan to contact their HR department or seek outside immigration counsel for hiring international students about 6 months before a student’s OPT period ends.

¹ Adapted from a document which was originally published in 2000 with a grant from NAFSA: Association of International Educators Region XII. Revisions made in 2004, 2010 and 2016. Editors: Laurie Cox, University of Wisconsin, Madison; 2010 coeditors: Lay Tuan Tan, California State University Fullerton, Phil Hofer, University of La Verne & Junko Pierry, Stanford University; 2016 co-editors: Junko Pierry, Stanford University & Laurie Cox, Ball State University.

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Other Questions about Hiring International Students¹

➤ **Does an employer have to prove that international students are not taking jobs from a qualified American?**

No, American employers are not required to document that a citizen of another country did not take a job from a qualified American if that person is working under an F-1, J-1, or H-1B visa.

Employers only need to document that they did not turn down a qualified American applicant for the position when they wish to hire foreign citizens on a permanent basis and sponsor them for a permanent resident status (“green card”).

➤ **What is the cost of the E-Verify program and how can I enroll in the program?**

There is no cost to register in the E-Verify program. Information on E-Verify and the enrollment procedure can be found on the USCIS website at <https://www.e-verify.gov/>

➤ **What documents need to be provided for employment verification (I-9)?**

For Optional Practical Training, F-1 students receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS, which is a small photo identity card that indicates the dates for which they are permitted to work. For Curricular Practical Training, F-1 students receive work authorization from the school (NOT from USCIS) on page 2 of the student's I-20. For Academic Training, J-1 students receive work authorization from the school that is listed on the student's form DS-2019.

Employers typically view and retain copies of these documents as part of their standard employee onboarding processes.

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Hiring a Northwestern International Student at Your Organization

“From my experience working with international students, I find that they are very comfortable stepping outside of their comfort zone and working in new environments. They are determined and resilient to new changes, and they can quickly adapt to unforeseen changes. We also work largely in global markets with international stakeholders – this is where internationality can bring much to the table, with their local knowledge, expertise, and connections.”

- ***Employer, Large Financial Services Company***

For general information about Northwestern International Students:

Northwestern Office of International Student and Scholar Services
<https://www.northwestern.edu/international/>

To recruit engineering and science international students for full-time jobs, internships or to post a job:

Allison Berger
Manager, Employer Relations
Engineering Career Development
a-berger@northwestern.edu
847-491-2613

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Glossary of Terms

Academic Training – Employment authorization allowing J-1 students to participate in internships, co-ops, and other types of practical experience gained through off-campus employment.

DS-2019 – A certificate of eligibility for J-1 students. Hiring a J-1 student under Academic Training requires that the application be received and authorized prior to the end date on a student's DS-2019, or before the official date of their degree program completion – whichever comes first.

Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card – A small photo identity card that international students receive from USCIS that indicates the dates for which they are permitted to work under Optional Practical Training.

E-Verify - A system that allows businesses to determine the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States. Employers who wish to hire an F-1 international student from a STEM program and extend their post-graduation OPT for an additional 24 months need [to be enrolled](#) in the E-Verify program.

F-1 Visa - The type of visa given to most students studying full-time in the United States. F-1 visa holders are eligible for both CPT (work authorization for internships or co-ops) or OPT (work authorization for limited-term post graduation work), but students should check with the Northwestern OISS to confirm the details of eligibility.

I-20 - A form that confirms the eligibility and status of F-1 international students. This form is updated whenever a student uses CPT or OPT.

J-1 Visa – The type of visa given to international visitors coming to Northwestern as students who meet specific guidelines. Some J-1 visa holders are eligible for Academic Training to participate in internships, co-ops, or other types of practical experience, but visitors should check with Northwestern's OISS to confirm details and eligibility.

STEM OPT Extension - F-1 students who receive selected [science, technology, engineering, or mathematics \(STEM\) degrees](#) are eligible for a 24-month extension on top of their 12-months of post-graduation OPT. Students should contact Northwestern's OISS to confirm their eligibility for the STEM OPT extension under their current degree program.

USCIS – United States Citizenship and Immigration Services – an agency of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that administers applications for work visas, including H-1B visas.

Information about additional visa types can be found on NAFSA's [Visa Classifications chart](#).

Additional Resources

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
<https://www.dhs.gov/>

Study in the States
<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/>

U.S. Citizens and Immigration Services (USCIS)
<https://www.uscis.gov/>

American Immigration Lawyers Association
<https://www.aila.org>