



Hiring International Students: A Guide for US Employers

Recruiting International Students in the US

Hiring international students is a simple process. In most cases, the application is the responsibility of the student, not the employer.

Columbia Engineering's international students typically hold an F-1 (international student) or J-1 (exchange visitor student) visa. F-1 and J-1 visas allow students to work in the United States before and after graduation.

Summer Internships: Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

- Hiring F-1 Students for internships is free and easy for employers and does not require employer “sponsorship”.
- Students have work authorization (CPT) in their field after two terms of full-time study.
- Employment can be full-time or part-time.
- Applying for CPT is the responsibility of the student, not the employer.
- Columbia University requires a copy of the official offer letter confirming the details of the internship, including internship start and end dates, full-time (>20 hrs/wk) or part-time status (<20 hrs/wk), description of job duties, and employer signature.

Full-Time Positions: Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- Columbia Engineering F-1 students have 12 months of work authorization (OPT) after completing their degree. They are eligible for an additional 24 months through STEM OPT extension, for 36 months.
- Students must work a minimum of 20 hours per week to maintain OPT eligibility.
- Applying for OPT is the responsibility of the student, not the employer.
- After 36 months, students can transition from OPT to another visa type, such as the H-1B.
- Employers can confirm the eligibility of their employees electronically through the E-Verify system.



J-1 Visa (Exchange Visitor Student)

- J-1 Students are eligible for 18 months of work authorization through the University's Academic Training Program (PhD. Students may be authorized to work for up to 36 months).
- Applying for work authorization is the responsibility of the student, not the employer.
- Columbia University requires a copy of the official offer letter confirming the details of the internship, but the student typically provides this.

Continuing Employment After OPT: H-1B Visa (Temporary Work)

- The H-1B Visa (Temporary Work) is an employer-sponsored visa for foreign nationals employed in a "specialty occupation," which includes any position that requires a Master's degree.
- Students with H-1B Visas may be eligible for up to 6 years of employment with the sponsoring employer.
- The employer is responsible for filing the petition on behalf of the international employee for the H1-B visa. The process is detailed on the US Citizenship and Immigration Services website (www.uscis.gov).

We are here to help!

If you have additional questions about hiring international students, contact us at HireTalent@columbia.edu or 212-853-5891. For more information on engaging with Columbia Engineering talent, visit our website: <https://career.engineering.columbia.edu>.