

International Students

This guide provides an overview of resources to assist you in preparing for the job search, securing a meaningful full-time or part-time opportunity while you are in the US, and identifying recent international student employers.

As an international student at Chicago Harris, you have numerous resources to assist you in achieving your professional goals. You may, however, face some additional challenges in securing employment authorization, assimilating to cultural norms, and overcoming language hurdles. In addition to the Chicago Harris Career Development Office, the University's Office of International Affairs (OIA) will be a key resource for you. OIA advisors provide information regarding immigration-related issues and access to important resources throughout your time on campus. Connect to OIA at <https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/>.

EMPLOYMENT OVERVIEW FOR F-1 STUDENTS

"Employment" is considered any form of work or service provided in exchange for monetary compensation, tuition, fees, books, supplies, lodging, or any other benefit. Please note: If pay or other benefits are not received, yet the work is generally viewed as deserving of compensation, the activity shall not be considered "volunteering." OIA assist you in identifying, for legal purposes, the nature of the activity/opportunity so that you do not inadvertently endanger your student status in the US.

"Work Authorization"

International students who wish to be employed in the US must obtain work authorization to do so. This authorization is obtained from OIA and is specific to the employment opportunity—that is, you must obtain it each time you accept a new opportunity.

On-campus Work Authorization:

F-1 students can work on-campus as soon as they arrive and throughout the duration of their studies. Students may not work over 20 hours per week when school is in session; however, employment hours are unlimited over academic breaks. Metcalf Fellowships or other stipends paid by the University of Chicago are considered on-campus employment, including positions that may be located at an off-campus site.

Off-campus Work Authorization:

Curricular Practical Training (CPT): OIA authorizes work authorization for off-campus, part-time and full-time employment.

To be eligible for CPT, you must have been enrolled as a full-time student for the three quarters directly preceding the start of your employment. For example, if you are a first-year student, your summer internship cannot begin until the day after the end of spring quarter. CPT is only available prior to completing your program. It is employer and date specific, so you must have a job offer before applying for CPT.

Benefits

- Allows individual to gain necessary career-related experience as a student
- No application fee
- Processed through OIA and work authorization can be granted within one week
- Does not subtract time from Optional Practical Training (OPT) as long as less than 12 months of full-time CPT is used; students can work unlimited part-time CPT

Eligibility requirements

- Applicant must have been enrolled as a full-time student in the United States for the three quarters preceding employment
- Student must maintain F-1 status through duration of CPT

Harris' Course-Based CPT PPHA 51200 Field Research

- Chicago Harris students may be eligible to apply for course-based CPT, if they are eligible to enroll in PPHA 51200. This course is offered every quarter, including summer quarter; students must enroll for the quarter in which they will be employed. It is a non-credit, internship preparation course. For information regarding PPHA 51200, contact Kate Shannon Biddle in the Office of Student Affairs, kbiddle@uchicago.edu.

Optional Practical Training (OPT):

Students are entitled to 12 months of OPT per educational level after one full year of study. Students are able to apply for pre-completion OPT or post-completion OPT. OPT used for part-time employment throughout the academic year will be subtracted from the OPT total at a half rate (e.g., six months part-time is equivalent to three months full-time). Students cannot work without the Employment Authorization Document (EAD), which accompanies OPT.

Pre-completion

Pre-completion OPT applies when requesting work authorization to begin before you complete your program. OPT used during this time, at a part-time rate, will be subtracted from the total 12 months at half rate (e.g., six months part-time is equivalent to three months full-time). You must have a job offer when applying for pre-completion OPT.

Post-completion

Post-Completion OPT applies when requesting work authorization to begin after graduation, or after completion of course requirements for MA/PhD students). Post-completion OPT is granted on a full-time basis only (over 20 hours a week). All previous periods of OPT at the same level are deducted from the 12-month total. Part-time OPT is counted at a half-rate. You can apply up to 90 days before and up to 60 days after the program end date listed on your I-20.

Example: Four months part-time OPT is subtracted from the total as two months. During your initial post-completion OPT period you can have up to 90 days of unemployment. The STEM OPT extension allows 120 days of unemployment (for the entire time spent on OPT).

Additional Information

- Post-completion OPT can be granted without having a job offer
- Authorization is granted through Immigration Services USCIS and requires 3-4 months processing
- OPT can be used for full-time summer internships and after graduation
- Applicant must be a full-time student for one year before beginning OPT
- If employed by an international organization (e.g., World Bank or IMF), student can apply for a special work authorization that does not use OPT time.

General OPT Guidelines for employment with a recognized international organization:

International Organizations

If you are an F-1 international student and have a job offer from one of the recognized international organizations (e.g. World Bank), you can apply to US Citizenship and Immigrant Services (USCIS) for off-campus work authorization without using your OPT time.

- You must be present in the US in F-1 status (unlike other off-campus work authorizations there is no nine-month waiting period)
- You are only eligible to apply while you remain a full-time enrolled student (before program completion)
- Employment does not have to be related to your current course of study
- An official job offer letter on the organization's letterhead is required
- You must apply to OIA for recommendation and to USCIS for authorization

- An Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) from USCIS is required before beginning work and usually takes 3-4 months for processing
- Authorization is granted by USCIS for the specific dates listed in the job offer letter in increments of no more than one year
- You can be authorized by USCIS for full-time employment
- This employment will not take away from your OPT or CPT authorization time limits.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

Please find the information below at the OIA website:

- Additional OIA programs
- Answering questions regarding work authorization in applications and interviews
- Check-list for international travel as a F-1 or J-1 student
- Information for J-1 Students
- Other Work Authorization Options
- Permanent Residence/Green Card Process
- Spouses and Partners Resource Page
- Work Authorization After F-1 or J-1
- Mandatory workshop for all international students on OPT
- *Please work directly with OIA advisors regarding immigration status and work authorization. Chicago Harris counselors can only provide general information.*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. I have questions regarding immigration, visas, and CPT eligibility. Who can I talk to?

One of the most difficult challenges faced by international students is securing work authorization and employer sponsorship. We recommend beginning this process at least six months to a year in advance of when you would like to start working. Allot at least 90 days to receive USCIS work authorization for Optional Practical Training (OPT) if you are in F-1 status.

Before beginning the job search process, schedule a time to meet with an international student advisor at OIA. It is critical to thoroughly understand relevant employment guidelines and immigration regulations as you prepare to enter the US or international job markets.

As a Chicago Harris student, you are encouraged to reach out to your designated Harris OIA Advisor, Jen Nafziger, at international-affairs@uchicago.edu.

2. What OIA employment information is most relevant to Chicago Harris students?

The [OIA website](#) also has additional information on their programs, international travel as an F-1 or J-1 student, work authorization in applications and interviews, resources for spouses and partners, work authorization after F-1 or J-1 status, other work authorization options, and the permanent resident/green card process.

3. What are my “selling points” as an international student? I have a variety of interests and experiences. What criteria should I keep in mind when considering various career paths?

In addition to the degree you will earn from The University of Chicago, employers appreciate your diverse background, language skills, international networks, and cultural acumen. These attributes are further strengthened by the skills you have attained adapting to life overseas, such as tenacity, responsible risk-taking, decision-making, and resourcefulness.

Employers want applicants who understand their own strengths and can effectively communicate how a specific position and organization aligns with their professional goals. Consider your values, interests, and skills as you contemplate possible career fields, work environments, and lifestyles. In addition to meeting with a CDO counselor and attending workshops, review the [Chicago Harris Career Development Guides](#) to assist you in this process.

4. What resources are available to assist in improving my communication skills?

As you assess your personal and professional goals, consider your knowledge of the American culture and your command of English. Positions in the US that entail a great deal of contact with others require strong language skills. Practice by taking advantage of opportunities to present in class, taking leadership roles in clubs, and interacting with English speakers. If you need additional support, consider enrolling in individual tutoring or a course on writing, pronunciation, and communication strategies through the [University of Chicago's English Language Institute](#).

5. How do I identify positions and organizations of interest to me in my target fields?

Once you have determined which career fields are a good fit, you should explore industries, job descriptions, companies and/or organizations, typical salaries, and benefits. The [Career Development Guides](#) on industry research and employer tracking will be very helpful throughout this process.

Certain positions will only be open to US citizens or permanent residents (particularly jobs in the US government). If the job posting does not indicate this information, please contact the organization or employer directly to determine your eligibility. You can also call your country's nearest consulate or embassy to inquire about a list of your home country's firms that do business in the US, and US companies seeking to do business in your home country. Many of the most sought after US employment opportunities are with international companies/global organizations.

6. In addition to online research, how can I make connections with employers in target fields?

Networking is essential in any US-based job search, particularly because so many opportunities are not advertised. Informational interviewing is also an important component in researching jobs, industries, and organizations/companies. Use the following University resources to identify alumni in your field of interest and conduct informational interviews:

- [Alumni Directory](#)
- [International Alumni Clubs](#)

7. What practical experience can I gain while I am still a Chicago Harris student?

Practical work experience complements your academic training and enhances your marketability. However, because F-1 and J-1 visas only authorize a limited amount of off-campus work, many students save that authorization for after graduation. Instead of working off-campus before completing your degree, visit the [student employment website](#) to identify and apply to campus work opportunities. International students are also possibly eligible to engage in off-campus employment related to their degree as long as they obtain authorized CPT.

Don't forget to participate in professional and campus organizations. These activities count as experience in many industries, will help you develop a network of contacts, and provide an opportunity to develop your English skills. You can also gain valuable work experience by volunteering or serving as an intern at a non-profit organization. To ensure the position is a bona fide unpaid volunteer or internship experience that falls within the limits of your visa status—consult your OIA adviser before beginning any internship or volunteer experience. A variety of nonprofit organizations are listed in the [Career Development Resources](#) page.

Chicago Harris students are also encouraged to hone applied skills through the University Community Service Center's Service Match Program. The Service Match Program connects a group of five or more students to hands-on experience in the public sector through ongoing volunteer activities at community organizations near campus. Students have a chance to build meaningful relationships in the surrounding community through focused, project-based initiatives. To learn more about the Service Match Program, contact servicematch.ucsc@gmail.com or visit the UCSC website ucsc.uchicago.edu.

8. I need help preparing my resume and cover letter. Who can help me?

A well-prepared resume and cover letter are essential tools for securing an interview. Remember, there are differences between US and international resumes. For example, in the US the terms "C.V." and "Resume" refer to two separate documents.

1. Schedule an appointment to meet with a Chicago Harris counselor through [HarrisLink](#) to review your resume and cover letter. Writing effective resumes and cover letters is a skill that requires time and practice.
2. Review the [Resume and Cover Letter CDGs and Templates](#).
3. Participate in CDO professional development workshops.

9. How do I prepare for an interview? Do I need to discuss my Visa Status?

Employers are not allowed to discriminate in hiring on the basis of immigration status and therefore cannot ask you to disclose your visa status. They are, however, allowed to ask if you are legally authorized to work in the United States, or if you require sponsorship for an employment visa. You should not expect a prospective employer to know what is required for your work authorization.

Review resources on the [OIA website](#) to develop a thorough understanding of U.S. employment laws to assist in addressing employers' concerns and further convey the benefits of hiring a non-immigrant employee.

In addition to reviewing the [Interview Preparation Career Development Guide](#), make an appointment with your CDO counselor to discuss interview preparation, execution, and follow up. CDO counselors understand that these can be difficult questions and will help you practice an answer that is both honest and positively portrays your situation.

10. What additional career resources are available on campus?

- Chicago Career Connection (CCC) & Listhosts: An online tool—specifically for University of Chicago students and alumni—accessible via careeradvancement.uchicago.edu. CCC lists internships and full-time employment opportunities in a variety of sectors and industries, at both national and international locations. You can also sign up for Career Advancement listservs to receive updates on career-related programs and job leads in specific industries.
- CDO programs include employer information sessions, alumni panels, career fairs, and career development workshops. Check the HarrisLink events calendar regularly for details.

11. How can I find US Employers that hire international students?

International students often ask which employers hire foreign students. Unless an employer specifically states that international applicants will not be considered, you should not exclude any organization from your target list. It is appropriate to reach out directly to employers for more information on how they may view international applicants. You should also network with fellow international students and alumni to gather valuable information on their previous employers and perspectives regarding their professional experiences.

- **My Visa jobs** provides free information on employers who have sponsored international employees for H-1B visas (required for full-time post-graduate, post-CPT employment). The information is listed by Status, Career, Title, City, and Industry.
- Check with OIA for special information for citizens of Singapore and Chile who get special consideration outside of the H-1B cap (65,000 + 20,000 for graduate degree candidates). Also, Mexican and Canadian citizens in 63 fields qualify for three-year renewable visas.

The Chicago Harris Career Development Office has also compiled a list of employers who have recently hired international students—see the following page.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EMPLOYERS

PRIVATE

Consulting

- Accenture
- Aon Hewitt
- Argus Information
- Arthur D. Little
- A.T. Kearney
- Bayser Consulting
- Boston Consulting Group
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- Compensation Advisory Partners
- Cornerstone Research
- Deloitte Consulting
- Exeter Group
- EuroConsult
- First Manhattan Consulting Group
- Global Prior Art
- Hay Group
- Hill International
- McKinsey & Co.

Corporate Governance/ Global Citizenship

- Allstate Insurance Company
- Burson-Marsteller
- Jones Lang LaSalle
- Kraft Foods
- Microsoft Corporation
- Minebea
- Qualcomm
- Robert Bosch GmbH and Siemens AG
- ShoreCap Exchange
- Shunra Software
- SyncSort Inc.
- TeleTech
- ZL Technologies

Energy

- EnCana
- Edwards & Zuck, P.C.
- GE Energy

Financial Services

- Agricultural Bank of China
- Banco Santander
- Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- Barclays
- BNP Paribas
- Brookstone Partners
- The Cambridge Group
- Citibank
- Credit Suisse
- Ernst & Young
- EuroHypo AG
- Goldman, Sachs & Co.
- Gov't of Singapore Investment Corporation
- Houlihan Lokey
- Insurial Americas, Inc
- Invotex
- JPMorgan
- KPMG
- Morgan Stanley
- Morningstar
- Nomura Asia Holding
- Pacific Investment Management Company
- Paragon Capital Partners
- Shanghai Stock Exchange
- Societe Generale Corporate & Investment Bank
- Spot Trading
- Standard Chartered
- Terra Technology
- UBS Investment Bank
- William Blair & Company, LLC

Health Care

- Synovate Healthcare

Transportation/Urban Planning

- Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona
-

NON-PROFIT

Economic/Financial Policy

- Breakthrough Institute
- Inter-American Development Bank
- National Institute of Public Finance & Policy
- Planet Finance
- Washington DC Economic Partnership

Education

- Tulane University

Energy/Environment

- Resources for the Future
- Securing America's Future Energy
- World Wildlife Fund

Health Policy

- Unite for Sight
- NORC

International Policy

- Adventist Development and Relief Agency
- Carnegie Middle Eastern Center
- Clinton Foundation
- Fulbright
- German Council on Foreign Relations
- Peace Corps
- Plan International
- UNICEF
- United Nations
- The World Bank

Social Policy

- Adventist Development and Relief Agency
 - Fulbright
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - NORC
 - PACT Parikrma Humanity Foundation
 - Pan American Health Organization
 - Peace Corps
 - PlaNet Finance Group
 - Plan International
 - The Tobin Project
 - U.N. Development Program
 - U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees
 - World Vision International
-

PUBLIC

- Chilean Ministry of Education
- Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland
- Hong Kong Institute for Monetary Research
- Ministry of Agriculture, Japan
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gov't of Japan
- Oxford Economic Research Associates
- T.R. Prime Ministry State Planning Organization