OVERVIEW

Looking for an internship or full-time job in any country requires significant time and energy, but for international students, there can be added challenges to the job search process. Engineering Career Services is committed to assisting students with the career tools that are necessary in the job search. In this guide, you will learn what strategies and resources are essential in achieving success.

DID YOU KNOW...
• There are approximately one million international students in the U.S. and make up nearly 11% of Ohio State’s Columbus campus?
• International graduates across the U.S. compete for just 85,000 H-1B U.S. visas issued by lottery each year?
• Students who graduate from U.S. schools like Ohio State are sought by competitive, global companies?

As an international student, creating a thorough job search plan that fits your needs and professional goals is key. Consider meeting with an ECS Career Advisor who can assist you with your plan and make sure you are being most effective with your time, energy, and resources. Before you begin your job search, concentrate on becoming a competitive candidate.

GAINING EXPERIENCES

As an engineering student, it is crucial to gain experience outside the classroom. Think broadly about what ‘experience’ means. You can gain experience through a number of activities during your time at Ohio State. In the job market, employers want to see a well-rounded individual who has strong academics, but who also has unique experiences such as:

- **INTERNSHIPS**
  Gain practical work experience that aligns with your major field of study by working at an organization that interests you.

- **PROJECTS**
  Apply your creative thinking skills by getting involved in classroom projects, project teams, or your own personal project.

- **RESEARCH**
  Work alongside faculty or conduct research on your own, especially if you are considering work in academia after you graduate.

- **CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT**
  Apply for an on or off-campus job where you can gain transferable skills that are applicable to your future career.

- **STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS**
  Build community by getting involved in one of the thousands of student organizations at Ohio State.

- **VOLUNTEERING**
  Give back to the community during school breaks by volunteering with your peers at a local non-profit organization.

- **STUDY ABROAD**
  Experience a new culture and gain a greater understanding of the world by spending a semester in a different country.
ARTICULATING YOUR SKILLS

As an international student, you can offer an employer a unique perspective. You hold the potential to provide thoughts and ideas from a different angle that can lead to better solutions for the company. As you have been exposed to different cultures and systems, it sets you apart from other students making you a well-rounded candidate. Along with your technical, academic, and practical experiences, highlight other essential skills you have gained as an international student. Most importantly, knowing how to articulate those skills is key. Here are some qualities to consider that you offer employers.

CULTURAL AWARENESS
As you immerse yourself in a new culture and learn new customs, you will begin to familiarize yourself with cues and trends that might not always be expressly stated. Adapting and being comfortable in different cultures makes you employable and helps you build a strong global network. As more companies have expanded globally, understanding and respecting cultural difference is more important than ever. Immersing yourself in a culture shows that you are willing to adapt to the environment around you, which is an essential skill to have in the workplace. Demonstrate to employers how you portray this skill and how you can impact the company’s clients and customers.

LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL SKILLS
Not only is communication about learning a new language, but it involves understanding non-verbal cues, writing, and expanding your vocabulary. Communication involves understanding a new language to therefore create profound and purposeful conversations. Highlight your language skills and how being fluent in more than one language can help the organization communicate with their partners.

PROBLEM-SOLVING
As you learn and adapt to a new culture, there will be situations and processes that you have not encountered before. Working through challenges by using the resources around you are necessary to be successful. Demonstrate to employers how you have solved personal situations and found answers in a given scenario. The times where you had to think on your feet or take responsibility shows that you are resourceful and can navigate unexpected circumstances.

U.S. WORK AUTHORIZATION CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPT</th>
<th>OPT</th>
<th>AT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curricular Practical Training</td>
<td>Optional Practical Training</td>
<td>Academic Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition:</strong> Temporary work authorization related to student’s academic program.</td>
<td><strong>Definition:</strong> Temporary employment authorization directly related to student’s field of study.</td>
<td><strong>Definition:</strong> Training for students in their field of study as a form of experiential learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is eligible:</strong> F-1 visa students who have been enrolled in a full course of study for at least one academic year.</td>
<td><strong>Who is eligible:</strong> F-1 visa students who will be completing degree requirements in the current semester.</td>
<td><strong>Who is eligible:</strong> Valid J-1 status students who must maintain status throughout period of academic training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authorized by:</strong> Student Immigration Coordinator at OIA.</td>
<td><strong>Authorized by:</strong> United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).</td>
<td><strong>Authorized by:</strong> Academic Advisor and Student Immigration Coordinator at OIA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration:</strong> Employment is dependent, but is granted on a semester basis.</td>
<td><strong>Duration:</strong> 12 months; (F-1 students who have completed a bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral degree in a STEM field, may apply for STEM Extension OPT).</td>
<td><strong>Duration:</strong> Employment may be authorized for the length of time necessary to complete the goals and objectives of the training and can differ between degree levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When to apply:</strong> Prior to the start date of the term in which student will be working. Must apply at least five business days before requested CPT start date and may only begin work on CPT after receiving a new I-20 form.</td>
<td><strong>When to apply:</strong> 90 days prior to program end date and up to 60 days after.</td>
<td><strong>When to apply:</strong> Pre or post-graduation.</td>
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</table>

**PRO TIP:** Contact a Student Immigration Coordinator at OIA for any specific questions regarding if/when you can and cannot work. OIA holds regular drop-in hours; please check their website for the most up-to-date advising schedule.
F-1 & J-1 EMPLOYMENT

The U.S. government has strict work authorization regulations, so it is crucial to become familiar with your work authorization eligibility. In addition, be aware that companies have varying levels of knowledge and experience in hiring international students whether on CPT, OPT, or Academic Training (AT). Therefore, understand the legal terms and limitations of your work authorization well enough to explain it to a potential employer. Some organizations have never hired an international student. Be your own advocate and educate employers with accurate information. Not being educated about these terms and limitations can seriously impair your job search.

The following employment information is obtained from the Office of International Affairs (OIA) at Ohio State.

A student holding F-1 or J-1 status is in the United States for the primary purpose of engaging in a full course of study. International students can obtain different types of employment depending on their visa status, including on-campus employment, Curricular Practical Training (CPT), Optional Practical Training (OPT), and Academic Training (AT). Talk to an immigration coordinator at OIA before working off campus. You may work off campus only if you have permission from an immigration coordinator or United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Working without authorization is a violation of your F-1 or J-1 immigration status.


ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

F-1 (international students attending an academic college or university)

F-1 students may work up to 20 hours per week on campus when classes are in session and over 20 hours per week during semester breaks and during the student’s annual vacation term. On-campus employment includes work done as a teaching or research assistant as well as jobs in the school library, cafeteria, administrative offices and restaurants on campus. Work off campus must be authorized by an immigration coordinator in the Office of International Affairs.

J-1 (exchange visitors or trainees who are often graduate students, medical residents, etc.)

If you are a J-1 student, federal regulations require any J-1 on-campus employment to be reported to and approved by the Office of International Affairs.

Find out more information about working on-campus on OIA’s website.


PRO TIP: If you are looking for an on-campus job, it is important to note that jobs listed as “work-study” are available only to U.S. citizens and permanent residents.
WORK AUTHORIZATION OPTIONS

**CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)**

Curricular practical training (CPT) is a type of off-campus work authorization for F-1 students who are currently enrolled in an academic program (work that occurs prior to graduation). In the federal regulations, CPT is defined as

“alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. CPT is an integral part of an established curriculum.”

Because CPT is defined as “curricular,” only work that is directly related to a student’s major field of study, and which is important for a student’s academic progress, may be considered for approval.

Training which is required by your degree program as stated in the course catalog always meets the requirements for CPT.

Training which is not required by your degree program may meet the requirements for CPT if you receive academic credit for the training experience, and your academic advisor can verify that it is an integral part of your established curriculum still in progress.

For eligibility requirements, what is needed to apply, application procedures, CPT workshops, and FAQ’s, please see the Curricular Practical Training information on OIA’s website.


**OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)**

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a type of work authorization for F-1 students that occurs post-graduation. In the federal regulations, OPT is defined as

“temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major area of study.”

It is intended to provide students with practical experience in their field of study during or, more commonly, upon completion of a degree program. An F-1 student may be authorized to receive up to a total of 12 months of OPT either before (pre-) and/or after (post-) completion of studies. However, students who have accumulated 12 months or more of full-time curricular practical training (CPT) are ineligible to apply for OPT.

An F-1 student is eligible for 12 months of OPT for each degree level. However, a student cannot apply for OPT at a degree level lower than one for which he/she has already been approved for OPT in the past.

F-1 students on OPT pursuing certain STEM degrees from U.S. institutions of higher education can apply for an extension of the OPT period by 24 months (a STEM OPT extension).

To learn more about the types of OPT, eligibility, requirements, and workshops see the Optional Practical Training information on OIA’s website.


PRO TIP: Some employers assume that hiring an international student is complicated, time-consuming and expensive. Many are not informed about the different kinds of work authorization, so understanding the process yourself is essential.
J-1 ACADEMIC TRAINING

Academic Training is a type of work authorization for J-1 students. It is available both before and after completion of your program of study. This work authorization is for off-campus employment and may be paid or unpaid.

You may work part-time on Academic Training while classes are in session, and full-time during summer vacation periods and official school breaks.

J-1 students in degree-granting programs, as well as those in non-degree exchange programs, are eligible to apply for Academic Training.

For eligibility requirements, time limitations, application procedures, and forms, please see the Academic Training information on OIA's website.


H-1B CAP GAP FOR F-1 STUDENTS

THE H-1B CAP
The H-1B cap is the congressionally-mandated limit on the number of individuals who may be granted H-1B status during each fiscal year. The earliest date that a cap-subject employer can file an H-1B petition for consideration under the next fiscal year cap is April 1, for an October 1 start date. If that H-1B petition and the accompanying change of status request are approved, the effective date of the H-1B status will be October 1.

F-1 students who are the beneficiaries of approved H-1B petitions, but whose periods of authorized stay (including authorized periods of post-completion OPT and their grace period) expires before October 1, may not have to leave the United States, and have the possibility of changing status to H-1B in-country. The regulations permit what is referred to as the “cap gap extension,” explained below.

Please note that some employers, such as educational institutions and some non-profit organizations, are cap-exempt, and can file an H-1B petition on behalf of an employee at any time of year.


THE F-1/ H-1B “CAP GAP” EXTENSION
The term “cap gap” refers to the period of time when an F-1 non-immigrant’s student status would ordinarily end and his or her H-1B status begins. That is to say, the period of time between the end of the 60-day grace period following the expiration of Optional Practical Training (OPT) and the start of the H-1B status.

For eligibility conditions and further information about receiving a cap gap extension, please see the H-1B Cap Gap For F-1 Students on OIA's website.

START PREPARING EARLY
Your career development begins the moment you join Ohio State. ECS is here to help you prepare for your career path and search for related internships and full-time jobs. Begin by creating your Handshake account and connecting with an ECS Career Advisor. Keep in mind that a considerable amount of employers recruit in the fall (September/October) for internships and full-time positions that begin in May/June, so it is best to understand the recruiting process for the role you are interested in well in advance.

DEVELOP A WELL-WRITTEN RESUME
Your resume will determine how successful you are in attracting potential employers – focus on your strengths and achievements. In addition, taking the extra time to tailor your skills and experiences to the job description is essential as employers want to see what you bring to the specific position and company. Check out the ECS resume templates in Handshake’s Resource Library.

SHOW CONFIDENCE
You have a lot to offer an employer and you should be proud of your background. The fact that you are an international student can be a huge advantage as it shows that you are flexible, adaptable, and independent just by virtue of coming to the U.S. to study. Are you fluent in multiple languages? Are you open to moving across the U.S. or abroad for an opportunity? These are all qualities that are sought after by employers. Highlight your unique background. It will help you stand out from the crowd.

GET CREATIVE
Explore opportunities that your peers are not. Be sure to review the Ohio State’s Career Fair list. Are there any non-engineering fairs you could attend? FYI: Some College of Engineering international students have been hired as a result of attending broader Ohio State career fairs. Also, find out what professional conferences could be beneficial for you to attend. Did you know that there are several engineering related conferences/conventions offering opportunities for students to connect with top employers? For example, the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) is an organization that holds career fairs at their conferences/conventions each year.

PRO TIP: Start sharpening your skills before the job application process begins by practicing essay writing and engaging in small talk with faculty and your peers!

APPLY TO MULTIPLE POSITIONS
If your goal is to find an internship or full-time position in the U.S., be persistent and devote multiple hours per week to your search. ECS suggests that international students apply to 50 postings per semester.

As you are applying to positions, take time to investigate trends in the job market. This is especially important if your major is specific and if the skills you acquired are in high demand in certain geographical areas.

BE RESULTS DRIVEN
Set weekly job search goals. For example, you could aim to secure a minimum of two conversations per week with contacts (on-campus or via LinkedIn) who might be able to help you get hired.

GET INVOLVED
Take some time outside of classes to speak with people who are working in the same career you want for yourself. Attend every networking opportunity you can fit into your schedule. Give back to the community by volunteering at a local non-profit organization. Consider working a part-time job to get some "on the job" experience.

KNOW HOW TO SUCCEED IN BEHAVIORAL BASED INTERVIEWS
Behavioral interview questions are asked to learn about your past “behaviors,” specifically how you handled various work situations. By asking about your past behaviors, employers can better predict how you will perform in future situations should you face a similar circumstance. Take some time to reflect on your experiences (whether inside or outside the classroom) where you dealt with a certain situation. As you think about these experiences and your behaviors, elaborate by using the S.T.A.R. format. During an interview, make sure to let the employer know the specific situation, task you faced, action you took, and the result. See page 30 in the ECS Student Handbook for additional practice. Some behavioral interview questions might include:

“Tell me about a time when...”
“Can you give me an example of when...”
“Describe a situation when...”

PRO TIP: If you are planning to attend a career fair, be strategic and do your research in advance. This will help you identify which companies hire international students.
STRATEGIES FOR THE U.S. JOB MARKET

KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS
What has your supervisor praised you for or how would those that know you best describe you? What makes you different from other candidates? Why should an employer hire you? You must find a way to stand out from other candidates and make connections to your relevant experiences. This tip holds true for both domestic and international students.

MAKE YOUR “CASE” TO AN EMPLOYER
For example, one big selling point to make clear to employers is that they have very little work to do in terms of hiring you while on CPT because all required paperwork for CPT is handled by OIA and the candidate. Employers often assume that there is a lot of time/money involved in hiring an international student, so be prepared to inform them about the process.

PREPARE TO DISCUSS IMMIGRATION STATUS
Although it is illegal for a potential employer to ask you your race, nationality, or immigration status, they can ask you if you are authorized to work in the U.S. You are not required to offer the information if not asked about your employment eligibility, but it is very important that you can explain it if necessary.

If your interviewer asks about your visa and work eligibility, answer directly and honestly. If a discussion about visa sponsorship has not been mentioned in your interview, it is in your best interest to bring it up casually. You can say: “I would like to mention that I am on a student visa and will need to briefly discuss my legal employment options with you if I am hired. My advisor has explained the procedures that exist for my lawful employment.” By bringing up the topic yourself before the interview concludes, you are showing the employer that you are motivated to get the job and that you are ready to assist them with the procedure.

BE AWARE OF CERTAIN INDUSTRY TRENDS AND REQUIREMENTS
• Some majors are in more demand than others. For example: Software engineering is more sought after than aerospace engineering due to the technological growth within the past few decades and the fact that security clearances are needed for many defense related positions.
• Some companies cannot hire F-1 students due to federal regulations.
• Non-U.S. citizens cannot obtain careers as U.S. Federal Government employees or work in positions that require a U.S. Federal Government security clearance.

CREATE A PARALLEL PLAN UPON GRADUATION
Create a second option or plan B that includes pursuing a different position/company/location if your plan A does not work out. Identify opportunities by visiting employer’s websites and using GoinGlobal (a resource that lists international opportunities in addition to U.S. positions and contains an H-1B database).
• Apply for positions in both the U.S. and your home country. Be strategic during your search by focusing on employers that have ties to your home country. Those companies may take an interest in developing your talents in the U.S. and want to continue your employment in your home country.
• Consider contacting your country’s consulate to request a list of the American employers that do business in your home country and a list of your home country employers who do business in the U.S.
• Be open to research and industry positions. Did you know that universities are not subject to the H-1B visa cap? Also be flexible with type of work – do not limit yourself by looking at one industry or a specific type of engineering position.

AVOID SCAMS
It is important to be aware of ongoing scams. If you are skeptical about whether you are receiving a legitimate business offering, follow these three recommendations from OIA:
1. Remember that you cannot accept any on or off-campus employment without prior approval from an immigration coordinator at the Office of International Affairs.
2. Never provide personal bank account information to anyone.
3. Report all scams to local law enforcement and talk to an attorney at Student Legal Services or Ohio State Police if you suspect a scam.


For additional guidance, visit the Ohio State Student Legal Services (SLS) website and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website with more information about how to avoid scams.
JOB SEARCH BEST PRACTICES

USE ECS RESOURCES
Register with ECS and set up an appointment with an ECS Career Advisor to discuss your individual situation. Create and use your Handshake job search account. Keep up-to-date with all employer related events via Handshake and ECS’ weekly email, the ECS Wire.

Become familiar with ECS’ course ENGR 4191 if you will be completing an internship or co-op. It is a zero-credit class with no meeting times, and its purpose is to maintain your student status. This course (or one similar to it) is required in order to maintain your CPT.

Some international students are concerned that language and cultural barriers may affect their ability to do well in interviews. Find resources that can improve your language and understand that your main goal or objective is to highlight your strengths and how they complement the position you are applying for. Here are some methods to prepare you for interviews in the U.S.:

• Find standard and behavioral interview questions in Handshake’s Resource Library, or in the ECS Student Handbook and rehearse with friends/peers. Studying common interview questions in advance will help you feel more at ease during an interview.
• Schedule a mock interview with an ECS Career Advisor.
• Use Big Interview for virtual interview practice and watch helpful tutorials.

TARGET COMPANIES WHO ARE OPEN TO WORK AUTHORIZATION
• Identify U.S. employers that hire students who require visa sponsorship by utilizing GoinGlobal. GoinGlobal offers worldwide, location-specific job/internship listings that are credible and constantly updated. GoinGlobal provides specific resources such as country career guides, job and internship postings, H-1B information (such as what companies have sponsored H-1B visas in the past, sourced from the Department of Labor), and a key employer directory. Access GoinGlobal in your Handshake account: (Handshake>CareerCenter>Resources>keyword “GoinGlobal” in the search bar).
• If you are looking to narrow your job search on Handshake, do not forget that you can filter by work authorization.
• Based on what College of Engineering international students have reported to ECS, you can find the 2018-2019 list of U.S. hiring employers for B.S. and M.S/Ph.D. students here.

RECOGNIZE EMPLOYER HIRING SCENARIOS
As an international student, know that you could face these three scenarios when talking with an employer:

• The company may hire if the skills they are looking for are in high demand.
• The company has hired international students in the past and may hire again.
• The company is not familiar with the hiring process or has never hired an international student.
JOB SEARCH BEST PRACTICES

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ECS EVENTS AND RESOURCES THAT ARE GEARED TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

• There are a variety of events that ECS hosts where you can gain tips and strategies from other international students who been successful in the job search. ECS hosts panel sessions led by international engineering students from different countries, majors and industries where panelists discuss various topics and tips that are aimed towards improving job search success. In addition, ECS hosts casual, drop-in sessions that are also led by international students as they can share their success stories and offer advice in a smaller setting.
• Every week throughout the school year, ECS posts helpful tips and strategies in the Job Blog. ECS posts blogs that showcase international students who have obtained an internship or full-time position in the U.S. These students discuss the responsibilities of their engineering role, resources they used during the search, and tips for other students who are seeking an internship or full-time job.

Upcoming events and blog features can be found on the ECS website. ECS Career Advisors encourage all international students to utilize these resources and events to gather advice and strategies for their own job search.

NETWORKING TIPS

Networking is connecting with faculty, staff, and industry professionals to have career conversations around topics of mutual interest. Networking is a great method to gather insight about a particular career path or company’s work culture and not about asking if they will hire you for a job or internship.

PUT YOURSELF OUT THERE
Challenge yourself to attend networking and social events to start building relationships with others. If English is not your first language, make the effort to interact with English speakers and use your elevator pitch to make others aware of your skills and experiences. For additional elevator pitch practice, attend ECS drop-in hours or refer to page 17 in the ECS Student Handbook. The more that you interact with others, present in the classroom, and secure leadership roles, the more you will be able to enhance your networking skills.

ATTEND NETWORKING EVENTS
Networking events can include career fairs, information sessions, employer presentations, conferences, hackathons, etc. Connecting with recruiters face-to-face can give you an edge over candidates who do not take the time to attend similar events. Attending events allows you to build relationships and share with others how you would be a good fit for a company. It is much easier to get noticed and make a positive impression with a recruiter in person vs. only applying through an online job portal. When networking at events and social gatherings, be aware of language cues and general etiquette. For example, in U.S. business culture, it is appropriate to speak about yourself and your qualifications. It is also common to make eye contact during conversation.
**NETWORKING TIPS**

**BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER WHEN NETWORKING WITH OTHERS**
When seeking information about a certain position, career, or industry, it is important to show interest. Take brief notes on the key points and ask follow-up questions that you may have. Remember to ask for business cards or contact information, and follow-up afterwards through a thank you email or by connecting on social media.

**PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS**
OIA offers programs to help international students get engaged and network on campus.

- **Global Engagement**: Opportunities for international and domestic students to experience the diverse culture at Ohio State. Global Engagement has implemented a variety of programs and activities to better promote cross-cultural relationships on campus.

- **The English Conversation Program (ECP)**: Way for international and domestic students to meet other students from around world. Students can expand their worldviews, improve their intercultural communication skills and make friends from different cultural backgrounds by taking part in exclusive field trips and activities.

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**RESOURCES**

**OHIO STATE RESOURCES**

- **Office of International Affairs**: Provides advising and assistance with immigration regulations and paperwork, social and cultural adjustment, and personal and financial concerns.

- **Ohio State Gateway Offices**: Due to Ohio State’s commitment to developing a global presence, the university has opened “mini embassies” that are dedicated to pursuing international partnerships and collaborating on global issues. Ohio State has Gateway locations in Shanghai, China, Mumbai, India and São Paulo, Brazil.

**EXTERNAL RESOURCES**

- **Study in the States**: A site that offers free government resources that explain the rules and regulations governing the international student process in the U.S. Use information on this page to learn about the process and rules for studying in the U.S.

- **GoinGlobal**: Offers thousands of worldwide job/internship listings which are updated daily. The database also contains state, metro and U.S. H-1B records gathered directly from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) which is the government agency responsible for all H-1B submissions. Access GoinGlobal through your Handshake account.

- **H1base.com**: This site provides the latest news, statistics, trends, and resources for U.S. immigration, visas, working in the U.S., and much more.

- **Immigration Attorney**: Mark Rhoads, President of McCandlish Holton and Director in the Immigration Practice Group. Contact for information regarding the H-1B visa process.

- **LinkedIn.com/jobs**: The “Jobs” feature within LinkedIn allows you to find both U.S. and international engineering job openings.

- **LockIn China**: An online recruitment platform based in China which focuses on helping companies recruit individuals who are interested in fulfilling jobs in China. LockIn China also provides support in career development opportunities such as workshops and career related events.

- **Monster International**: Monster International is a global leader in connecting people to jobs. Today, the company provides job postings in multiple countries including the U.S.