

Heinz Career Services

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION for INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Unless otherwise noted, the information in this packet was developed by Heinz Career Services Staff and Carly Dobbins-Bucklad, MSPPM '10 alum.

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Navigating your U.S. Job Search

Many Heinz College students want to stay and work in the U.S. after graduation. But since non-U.S. citizens are not allowed to work for or with the Federal government, many international students need to be more creative and careful in their job searches than some of their American counterparts at Heinz.

Keeping up with Required Documents

International students are required to abide by United States immigration regulations throughout their stay in the US. International students are admitted to the US by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the purpose of being full-time students. Participation by students in any other activity, from employment to vacation, is considered to be a privilege and is only allowable in accordance with strict DHS rules. Penalties for violations of immigration law can be severe and include deportation and 10-year bars from reentry to the US, so it is extremely important for students to understand their responsibilities.

International students are normally admitted to the US for "Duration of Status" (D/S). This means that they are allowed to remain in the US for as long as they "maintain legal student status," *NOT for the length of time listed on their Visa or Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019 form).*

Listed below are the documents that F-1 or J-1 students need to keep current while they are residing in the US along with the basic rules that students must follow in order to maintain legal student status in the US. Remember that it is the student's responsibility to be informed about immigration rules and any rule changes which occur during their stay in the US. The Office of International Education (OIE) provides Carnegie Mellon international students with the necessary information to do this, but it is the student and not the university who is ultimately responsible for abiding by the rules and maintaining legal student status.

YOU MUST ALWAYS:

1. **Maintain a valid passport** throughout your stay in the US.
2. **Attend the school you are authorized to attend** by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This is the school whose name appears on the form I-20 or DS-2019.
3. **Be registered as a full-time student (36 units minimum)** for 2 out of 3 consecutive semesters in the school year. You cannot drop below this except under specific circumstances *which must be authorized in advance by an OIE advisor*. Note: Inadequate funding is *not* an acceptable reason for dropping below the required course load. Students should feel free to discuss any financial concerns with an OIE advisor.
4. **Keep your Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019 form) valid** at all times and apply for extensions of stay *at least one month* before the document expires.

5. **Keep local and permanent address information current while in the U.S.** Enrolled students may do this through the HUB's Student Information On-Line web site. The "off campus residence" address must be completed with your current US residential address (except for undergraduate students living on campus). "Permanent address" must be an address in your home country.
6. **Maintain valid health insurance coverage.** For students in F-1 status, this is a CMU requirement. For students in J-1 status, this is both a CMU requirement and a federal requirement.
7. If you are in F-1 status and intend to engage in Optional Practical Training (OPT) after the completion of your program, *apply for OPT 90 days prior to program completion* or within the 60 day grace period following program completion. OIE strongly recommends applying before completing your program.
8. If you are in J-1 status, you must apply for Academic Training *before your DS-2019 expires*.
9. F-1 students have a *60 day* grace period and J-1 students have a *30 day* grace period in which to leave the U.S. or change to another immigration status. **F-1 students** may also use the 60 day grace period to obtain a new certificate of eligibility for a new school or program. **J-1 students cannot** use the 30 day grace period for SEVIS transfer purposes or to change level but must obtain a new certificate of eligibility for a new program before the end date listed on the DS-2019. Note that once you have completed or terminated your program, or have failed to maintain legal student status, you can no longer legally enter the US with your I-20 or DS-2019 form and the staff of OIE can no longer sign those forms.

YOU MUST NEVER:

1. WORK OFF CAMPUS unless you have the necessary authorization from an OIE student advisor (consult an OIE advisor for details).
2. Work on-campus *more than 20 hours per week* while school is in session.
3. Take a leave of absence, withdraw from classes, or drop below 36 units without receiving advance permission from the Office of International Education.

US Tax Obligations

All international students are required to complete and submit US tax forms to the federal government in April of every year for the previous calendar year whether or not they had any US source income. The Office of International Education will provide relevant information and volunteer tax advising in February and March.

J-1 Two-Year Home Residency Requirement

Some students in J-1 status are required to return to their home countries for a period of 2 years after they complete their studies plus any period of academic training before they can change to a more permanent work visa category. Any student who receives either US or home country government funding is subject to this rule. Also, any student whose field of study appears on the Exchange Visitor Skills List is also subject to this requirement. It is sometimes possible to waive the two-year rule. Consult an OIE advisor if you have questions.

Employment while at Heinz

Work experience is very valuable to be able demonstrate to employers. If you cannot find student employment or paid internships while at Heinz, then unpaid internships or volunteering is another way to boost your knowledge base and prove your skills in the work place.

On Campus Employment

F-1 and J-1 students may work on campus 20 hours or fewer per week while school is in session and full-time during vacation terms or any official school breaks. J-1 students must have permission from their program sponsor prior to beginning on-campus employment if the employment is not listed as a source of funding on their DS-2019. F-1 students do not require additional permission for on-campus work.

*Please note that **on campus** is defined as work for Carnegie Mellon University. Work that takes place at Carnegie Mellon for another employer (a professor's private company or companies housed in the Collaborative Innovation Center, for example) or work that takes place at another school is not "on campus" and would require employment authorization. Students should discuss employment authorization with their OIE advisor for any employment opportunity that involves an employer other than Carnegie Mellon University.*

Employment Options for F-1 Students

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) CPT is employment that is an integral part of an established curriculum and is directly related to the student's major area of study. Examples include a COOP program, internship, or research that is part of a thesis or dissertation.

Optional Practical Training Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a type of off-campus work authorization for F-1 students. OIE recommends the training and US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approves it.

OPT Eligibility

1. You must have been enrolled as a full-time student in legal immigration status for at least 1 academic year (2 semesters) before your OPT begins.
2. OPT authorization is limited to 12 months per degree level with an additional 12 months of OPT at each higher degree level. OPT for each level cannot be combined but must be used during/immediately after each level. Authorized OPT cannot be "saved" for use in the future.
3. Certain students in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) may be eligible to apply for a 17-month extension of OPT.

Conditions and Limitations

1. Work during OPT must be directly related to your major field of study and level of education. A job offer is not required at the time of application.
2. Students can engage in OPT:

- a. Part-time or Full-time: during the annual vacation period.
 - b. Part-time: during the course of study provided the training and other employment, on and off campus, does not exceed 20 hours per week total.
 - c. Full-time: after completion of all requirements for a degree.
3. Off-campus work is prohibited under any circumstances until OPT has been authorized by USCIS and you have received the Employment Authorization Document (EAD). On-campus work permission is prohibited from the date of program completion until the EAD has arrived and OPT authorization begins.

Application Timeline

The application process for OPT can take up to 90 days from date of receipt by USCIS. For post-completion OPT, you must file the application no earlier than 90 days prior to completion of your degree requirements and no later than 60 days after the completion of your degree requirements.

Severe Economic Hardship Employment based on severe economic hardship is designed to address situations where a financial need beyond the student's control arises, which was unforeseen at the time the student applied to the school he or she is currently attending and after all other potential employment opportunities have proven insufficient.

Employment Options for J-1 Students

On-Campus Employment Students in J-1 status may work on campus up to 20 hours per week while school is in session with the approval of their Responsible Officer. If your DS-2019 is issued by Carnegie Mellon your OIE foreign student advisor is your J-1 Responsible Officer (RO) and you must submit this form to the Office of International Education (OIE) for on-campus work permission. If your DS-2019 was issued by another organization, contact that organization for information about employment authorization.

Academic Training As a J-1 student you may work off campus in the US if you have received special written work authorization, prior to commencing employment, from your J-1 Responsible Officer. "*Academic Training*" is the name used to describe J-1 student off-campus work authorization for jobs related to the field. Academic Training (AT) is flexible and offers employment to supplement your academic program in the United States. It is available before and/or after completion of your program of study.

Other Employment-Related Issues for F-1 and J-1 Students

Social Security Number

The primary purpose of the Social Security Number (SSN) is to track individuals for taxation purposes in the US. F-1 students may apply for a social security number in person with the Social Security Administration only after a job offer has been secured or employment has begun. For a complete list of required documents and instructions, read OIE's handout [SSN Application Instructions \(.pdf\)](#).

SSN for On-Campus Employment

F-1 or J-1 students who have secured an on-campus job, but lack a SSN, will use OIE's [Social Security Number Form .pdf](#). The hiring department will first sign the form to verify the employment AND then OIE will sign to verify immigration status. The form is required in order to proceed with the SSN application process.

After Graduation

Below is information that you must know as you near the end of your academic program. In most cases, you will want to **contact OIE at least three months before you graduate** to find out your options. Remember that by law you have a limited time to take action from the date you COMPLETE your studies before your presence in the U.S. is no longer legal.

Be aware that the date you COMPLETE your studies is *the day you finish the last requirement* for your degree, NOT your graduation date – for example, it is the day of your last final exam. This last requirement date is important for interpreting the following information.

F-1 STUDENTS

A. If you are here in F-1 status (I-20), *and have completed your course of study*, you have 60 days from the day you **complete** your studies to do ONE of the following four things:

1. Leave the country
2. Apply for a change to another immigration status
3. Transfer to a new school or a new Carnegie Mellon program, get a new I-20 for that program and begin attendance in that program in the next possible semester
4. Begin Optional Practical Training

B. If you are here in F-1 status (I-20) *and you plan to withdraw from classes and leave Carnegie Mellon before* completing your degree program you **must get authorization in advance** from a Foreign Student Advisor. If you have been pre-authorized by your Foreign Student Advisor to withdraw from classes because you are planning to leave Carnegie Mellon you have 15 days to do one of the following things:

1. Leave the country
2. Apply for a change to another immigration status
3. Transfer to a new school or a new Carnegie Mellon program, get a new I-20 for that program and begin attendance in that program in the next possible semester

C. If you leave Carnegie Mellon without completing your degree program and without pre-authorization from your Foreign Student Advisor then you do not have any additional days to remain in the U.S. You must leave or apply for a change of status immediately.

D. If you are planning to apply for OPT practical training, you must *apply for the authorization before the end of your 60-day grace period*, or you will lose your eligibility for the training.

Since it takes anywhere from 1 to 3 months for the authorization approval to arrive from immigration, this means that you should *apply 3 to 4 months before you complete your program*. Information about how to apply for practical training is available at www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/forstu/pdf/optional-practical-training.pdf. Please read the handouts and then call 412-268-5231 to reserve a spot at an OPT work session.

E. Your I-20 cannot be signed once you have graduated unless you have applied for practical training.

This means that you should not plan any short trips to Canada after completing your program unless you have either received optional practical training work authorization, or you will return to your home country from Canada, or you will return to the U.S. on a tourist visa from Canada.

J-1 STUDENTS

A. If you are here in J-1 status (DS-2019), you have 30 days from the day you **complete** your studies to do ONE of the following 3 things: (once again, that this is the day you finish all requirements for the degree, **not the date on the DS-2019** or visa!)

1. Leave the country
2. Apply for a change to another immigration status
3. Begin Academic Training (Note that you must apply for Academic Training BEFORE you complete your degree requirements.)

You **must apply for academic training before you complete the degree requirements!** This deadline is final and non-negotiable. Please check the expiration date on your DS-2019. If your DS-2019 will expire and you plan to continue studying at CMU, you must apply for an extension one month before it expires. If you plan to transfer to a new school or a new Carnegie Mellon program, **you must work with the Foreign Student Advisor to have your record transferred by the date you finish your program.** You may not transfer after the expiration of the DS-2019.

B. If you are planning to apply for academic training you must apply for the authorization before you complete your degree program, or you will lose your eligibility for the training! Information about how to apply for academic training is available at www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/forstu/pdf/acatraj1.pdf. Please read the handouts and then call 412-268-5231 to schedule an appointment. You will need the job offer to apply for Academic Training.

C. Your DS-2019 cannot be signed once you have graduated, unless you have applied for academic training.

The information above is available through the Carnegie Mellon University Office of International Education. Find more information and related documents on their website, www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie.

Job Search Tips

- ✓ Pursue internships and volunteer experience – this is the best way to introduce yourself to an employer, while developing skills and experience.
- ✓ Talk to faculty – they will often have good ideas of appropriate employers in your field.
- ✓ Identify organizations that hire or sponsor international students – include foreign firms with operations in the U.S. and vice versa, research laboratories, and look into grants or fellowships available from your home country to help you pursue additional training opportunities in the U.S.
- ✓ Be patient but persistent – finding domestic employment as an international student is challenging, but feasible, since each year about 200,000 HI-B visas are granted.

Specific Challenges in the Job Search Process

- Employers may be concerned that if they hire an international employee, that employee will go back to their home country after the employer has invested time and money and maybe sponsorship in that person. Show that you are committed to staying in the U.S. and to the employer.
- After the optional practical training period, an employer must sponsor an international student to get an H1-B visa. This can be time-consuming and somewhat expensive for some employers, and can be daunting to employers who have never sponsored an international student before. Know the facts about the sponsorship process so you can make it easier for the employer and explain it if necessary. The more knowledgeable you are about the restrictions and benefits of your visa status and the different options available to, the more confident you can be in convincing the employer why you are best for the job.
- Some employers are against hiring international citizens for fear of “taking jobs away” from U.S. citizens. Be prepared to demonstrate how your unique background is a particular asset to the employer. It can be an advantage for an employer to have a bi-lingual employee or someone who is familiar with operations abroad.
- Employers might question the fluency of a non-native English speaker and be concerned it will be an impediment for job performance. Demonstrate that you are proficient in speaking and writing proper English and provide writing samples if appropriate. Being bi- or multi-lingual can be a real asset and strong communication skills are essential, so practice as much as possible.

Tips for writing Resumes and Cover Letters

- Be sure to use a format that is familiar to U.S. employers
- Introduce foreign experience to U.S. employers by providing a frame of reference. For example, “a \$10 million dollar marketing firm” or “One of the top 5 universities in China”
- Emphasize strong English skills on the resume. For example: "Translated written and spoken English on a daily basis for two years."

Tips for Interviewing with a U.S. Company

- Be punctual. Arrive five to 15 minutes prior to the interview.
- Eye contact is expected and shows confidence.
- Non-verbal behavior such as physical distance, personal appearance, and manner of dress all communicate things about you to the interviewer, so it is essential to understand and monitor non-verbal behavior prior to the interview.
- Interviewer styles vary. Some interviews may begin with direct questions or minimal small talk.
- Questions regarding age, race, sex, and marital status are illegal.
- Expect direct questions regarding competency/experience.
- An open discussion of accomplishments and skills shows confidence. Be assertive but not aggressive.
- Show clear self-knowledge, career goals, and long-term plans. NOTE: An international student may find it important to be flexible, however, to initially obtain employment.
- Interviewer may expect immediate competency and look at each new employee for a two- to five-year commitment.
- Self-disclosure of strengths, weaknesses, personality, leadership style, problem-solving abilities, etc. may be appropriate.
- Researching the organization and demonstrating that knowledge during the interview is expected. This shows initiative and interest.
- Always have at least 3 or 4 questions to ask the interviewer. Talk with a career counselor if you need ideas about appropriate questions to ask.

The suggestions above were developed by the George Washington University [Elliot School of International Affairs](#)

Employer Information

The following information can be found on Heinz's website:

www.heinz.cmu.edu/recruiters/hiring-international-students/index.aspx

Work Authorization

Students who are in the U.S. in legal F1 or J1 student (non-immigrant) status are generally eligible for student work authorization after completing their studies. This allows them to work in their field of study after completing their degree program for a limited time frame, provided they receive the necessary authorization before beginning employment. The amount of time for each type of work authorization and authorization procedures vary according to the student's immigration status and whether they used any of this work authorization while still a student.

Employer Legal Obligations

International students who applied for and received authorization to accept employment under practical or academic training need documentation of current eligibility to present to a prospective employer.

To obtain assistance in verifying the employment eligibility of an international student, please contact the Office of International Education at (412) 268-3520.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 did not change the rights and privileges of non-immigrant students wishing to accept jobs in this country. For employers, the new law prescribed specific procedures to be followed in verifying the employment eligibility of any individual they wish to hire.

Please note: *All* employees, including international students, must complete the I-9 "Employment Eligibility Verification" form available in the "immigrations forms" section of the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website](#). This is simply a record that the employer has verified the identity and legal employment eligibility of every person hired.

Long-Term Employment

H-1B Visa

If an employer wants to retain an F1 or J1 student beyond the practical or academic training period, it may be possible to secure an H-1B (Temporary Worker) visa. Information is available through the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#).

Although an attorney is not required, these applications should be prepared with careful attention to the instructions concerning the documents that have to be submitted with the completed forms. The entire process can take from a few months to more than six months. An H-1B visa may be continued for up to six years and is intended for "professional" employment. There is no requirement that American citizens be recruited or preferred for H-1B positions.

L Visa

Another option for longer-term employment is the L visa. This is for foreign nationals who have been employed abroad for a minimum of one year by a U.S. firm or corporation, or the affiliate or subsidiary of a U.S. company. These employees may transfer to the U.S. to continue their employment on L visas. The employer applies with the USCIS for the L visa, which permits foreign nationals to continue employment for up to three years.

NOTE: All of these options focus on non-immigrant visas. Employers often favor these types of visas because they represent a much smaller time and resource commitment to obtain than immigrant visas. Employees who intend to return to their home countries after having established themselves professionally over a few years do not need to pursue immigrant visa status.

Job Search Resources

- **US Department of Labor** - allows you to view which employers who have applied for H 1-B visas over a 5 year time period. **Search database by state to get names, position titles and salaries**
- **Yearly H1B Visa Employer Listings** <http://www.flcdatcenter.com/CaseH1B.aspx>
- **Career Conference of America, Inc.** <http://www.careerconferences.com>
- **CFG, Inc.** <http://www.cfg-inc.com>
- **Jobs & Info for Foreign Students** http://www.naspaa.org/students/careers/info_foreign.asp
- **Recruiters Online Network** <http://www.recruitersonline.com> Non-governmental/Nonprofit organizations information on international, national, regional, state and local non-profit organizations and potential job listings.
- **Associations Unlimited** <http://www.library.cmu.edu/Search/DB/AU.html>
- **Non-Governmental Organizational Research Guide** (Duke University) http://library.duke.edu/research/subject/guides/ngo_guide
- **UN Department of Public Information/ Non-governmental Organizations** <http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/asp/form.asp>
- **The Riley Guide** <http://www.rileyguide.com>
- **4 international Careers & Jobs** <http://www.4icj.com/>
- **iStudentCity** http://www.istudentcity.com/career/career_tips_basic.asp

- **InternationalStudent.com** <http://www.internationalstudent.com/>
- **Think Tanks** <http://www.lib.umich.edu/government-documents-center/explore/browse/political-science+think-tanks/856/search/> (U of Mich)
- **Washington Information Services** <http://www.h1visajobs.com>
- **H1B Sponsors** <http://www.h1bsponsors.com>

The list above was adapted from resources developed by the George Mason University School of Public Policy Career Center