

TIMESTEP

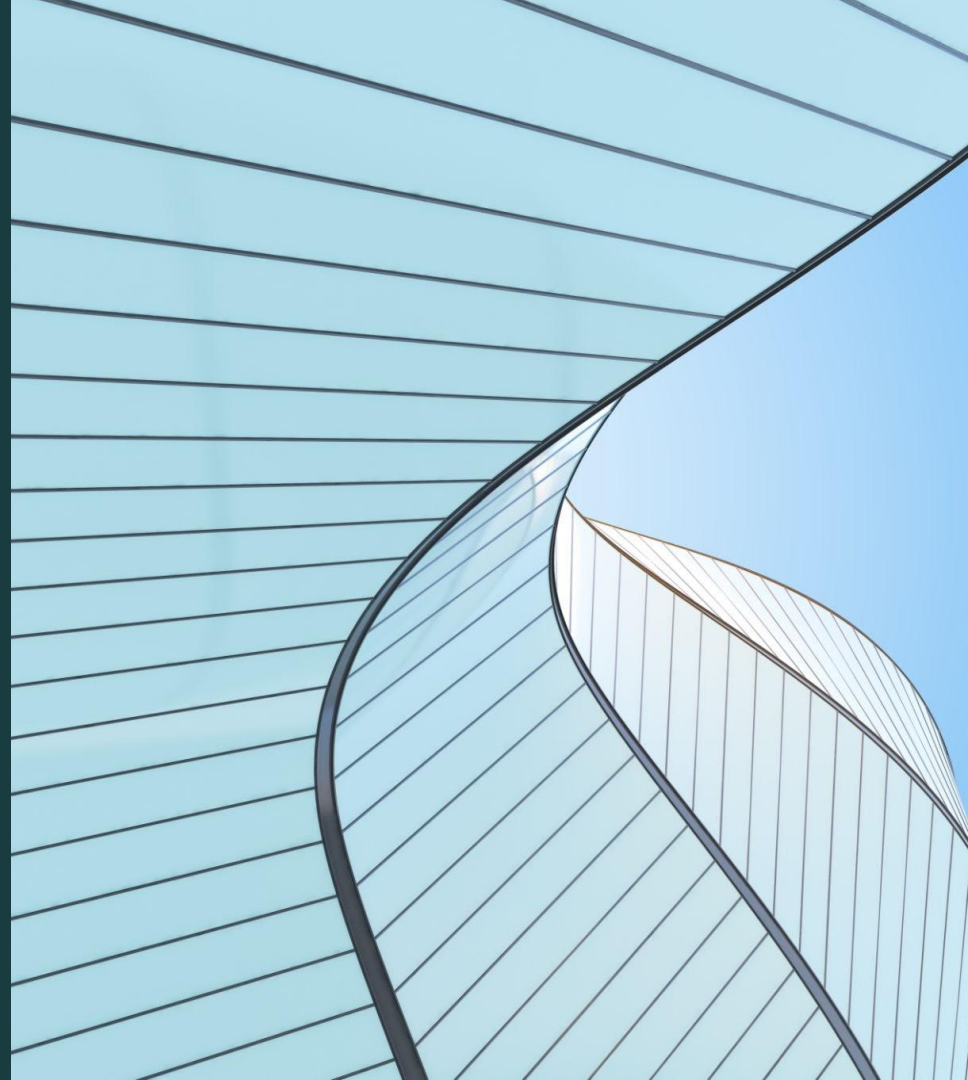
Navigating Industry Post-Graduation for International Students

Wednesday, March 25 at 5:00 – 6:30 pm

Zoom only:

<https://arizona.zoom.us/j/82615759625>

International student alumni will share what students need to know to pursue a job in industry after graduation (OPT, sponsors, finding positions, etc.). Bring your questions!



Alumni speakers

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Minh Duong

Software Engineer @ Google | Ex-Credit One Bank
University of Arizona, BS, Computer Science, 2024

I am a software engineer with experience in delivering impactful software products to businesses. Currently, I am working at Google Cloud, building cloud infrastructure for AI workloads. Previously, I worked as part of the software infrastructure team within Credit One Bank. My academic pursuit at the University of Arizona rewarded me with dual degrees in Computer Science and Economics. Outside of my professional career, I enjoy photography and practice piano.



Akash Satpathy

University of Arizona, MS, Information Science (Machine Learning Subplan), 2025
W.A. Franke Honors College, BS, Astronomy + Statistics & Data Science, 2022

I am currently an intern at Scale AI and moved to SF this year to get more involved start-up-y projects!

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General definitions

F-1 visa: A valid visa is required for all students entering the U.S., except citizens of Canada and Bermuda.

Form I-20: The I-20 is a Certificate of Eligibility that reflects the information in your SEVIS record. It lists your biographical information, program of study, expected degree completion date, estimated expenses, and source of funding. It also contains space for DSO-authorized benefits, like off-campus employment or reduced course load.

Form I-94: Customs and Border Protection creates an I-94 record for every nonimmigrant who enters the U.S. The I-94 shows your date of entry, visa category, and D/S.

CPT (Curricular Practical Training): Curricular Practical Training is a type of employment authorization that allows eligible F-1 students to work off-campus during their studies. CPT can only be authorized if the experience is directly related to your major area of study and is a required or integral part of your program's established curriculum.

OPT (Optional Practical Training): OPT is a form of work authorization that offers you the opportunity to gain practical work experience in your major field of study.

Visa vs. Status: What's the difference?

Student Visa: Your **F-1 visa is a travel document** issued by a U.S. consulate or embassy. It allows you to seek entry into the U.S. but does not guarantee entry. At the port of entry, a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will review your I-20, visa and other documents. If allowed entry, you will receive an electronic Form I-94 record confirming your date of entry, visa category, and D/S, for Duration of Status.

Student Status: Once admitted into the U.S., your F-1 student status begins. This status is what you must maintain during your stay. **Even if your visa expires while you are in the U.S., you can remain in the country as long as your I-20 is valid and you are maintaining your student status.**

What does it mean to “maintain status”?

As an F-1 student, maintaining your status means you must continue to meet the purpose for which your visa was granted – pursuing a full course of study at the University of Arizona. Some of the key aspects of maintaining your F-1 status include:

Full-Time Enrollment: You must enroll full-time every fall and spring semester.

Employment: You may only work as permitted under your F-1 visa, such as on-campus employment or practical training options like CPT or OPT.

Academic Changes: You must contact ISS within 10 days if any of the information on your I-20 changes or if you will need more time to complete your degree program.

Address Reporting: You must report any change of address in MyGlobal within 10 days of moving.

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

What OPT is:

Off-Campus Work Authorization: OPT is a form of work authorization that offers you the opportunity to gain practical work experience in your major field of study.

Flexible in Timing: OPT can be utilized either before or after completing your degree program.

12-Months in Duration: OPT gives you up to 12 months of employment per (higher) degree level, with an optional 24-month extension for eligible STEM fields.

Authorized by USCIS: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services authorizes OPT after receiving a completed application with an I-20 recommending OPT.

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

What OPT is not:

- **Not Automatically Granted:** OPT is not immediately available to you upon entering the U.S. in F-1 status. You must meet specific eligibility requirements to qualify.
- **Not a Separate Visa Category:** OPT is a benefit of your F-1 visa status. It is not a separate work visa or visa category.
- **Not Employer-Specific:** While on OPT, you can work for any U.S. employer, in any state, as long as it is related to your major field of study. You do not need to have an employer before applying for standard OPT.

Pre-Completion OPT: intended for work during your academic program

- Hours: Undergraduates and graduate students with coursework remaining can work up to 20 hours per week (part-time) during the fall and spring semesters. Part-time or full-time employment is allowed during winter and summer breaks.
- Unemployment: No penalty for unemployment.
- STEM & Cap-Gap Extension: You cannot apply for the STEM or cap-gap extension from pre-completion OPT.

Post Completion OPT: employment after you graduate

- Hours: Full-time authorization, but only must work at least 20 hours per week to maintain status.
- Unemployment: Cannot exceed 90 days of unemployment
- STEM & Cap-Gap Extension: If otherwise eligible, you may be approved for the STEM or cap-gap extension from post-completion OPT

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

Eligibility Criteria

You must meet the following eligibility requirements to be recommended for OPT:

- You are in F-1 status
- You have been enrolled full-time for one full academic year (consecutive fall and spring semesters) in valid U.S. immigration status. *Students studying remotely without an active I-20 record must enter the U.S. in F-1 status and enroll for one full academic year before becoming eligible for OPT.*
- You are in good academic standing (GPA = 2.0 or greater). If you have a low GPA or are on academic probation, ISS may hold your application until your grades are posted.
- You have not completed 12 or more months of full-time CPT.
- You have not previously been authorized for OPT at the same or higher degree level.

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

When to Apply

USCIS can receive your post-completion OPT application:

- No more than 90 days prior to your program end date
- No later than 60 days after your program completion date
- And within 30 days of when your I-20 was issued by ISS

You must receive your I-20 with OPT recommendation from ISS *before* you file your application with USCIS. Normal processing time for ISS is 10 business days. Please allow additional time to mail your application to USCIS. You must file Form I-765 while in the United States. If you have filed your application with USCIS during this period, you can remain in the U.S. after your 60-day grace period has ended with a pending application.

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

Program Completion Date

For immigration purposes, your program end date is **the date that you complete your degree requirements**, not the date of your graduation ceremony or degree conferral. Review the chart under **Academic Changes: Program End Date**.

- If you are completing your degree requirements prior to your I-20 end date, ISS will shorten your I-20. Please remember that **you must stop all on-campus employment by the end date of your I-20**.
- If you are completing your degree requirements after your I-20 end date, ISS will not automatically extend your I-20. You must instead formally request a program extension from ISS (go to **Academic Changes: Program End Date** for more information).
- If you are an undergraduate or master's student finishing your program during summer or winter, you must enroll in at least one in-person class during your final term. For example, if you complete your degree during summer session II, you must register for at least 1 unit of in-person coursework during summer II.

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

OPT Start and End Dates

When we issue an I-20 recommending OPT, we will print your requested OPT dates on page 2 of your I-20. Consider these dates carefully; you cannot change them after submitting your application to USCIS.

Post-Completion OPT:

- Start Date: Between 1 and 60 days after your program completion date (see above)
- End Date: 12 months after your OPT start date (minus any pre-completion OPT authorized at the same degree level)

For example, if your program end date is May 14, 2026, then you can request a post-completion OPT start date between May 15, 2026 and July 13, 2026. If you request a start date of June 1, 2026, your requested end date will be May 31, 2027 (assuming no pre-completion OPT at the same degree level).

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

Special Considerations:

- The dates printed on page 2 of your I-20 are only *requested* dates. The final dates will be determined by USCIS and printed on your EAD card upon approval.
- If you find a job before your requested start date, **you won't be able to start working until you have your EAD card in hand** and your OPT period has started.
- You **cannot accrue more than 90 days of unemployment total** during the entire period of post-completion OPT.
- Post-completion OPT must end within 14 months of your program end date. If your OPT is not approved until after your 60-day grace period has ended, you will not be authorized for the full 12 months.

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

How to Apply

Applying for OPT authorization is a 2-step process. First, you have to request an I-20 recommending OPT from ISS. After you receive the new I-20 from ISS, you must submit an application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.

IMPORTANT OPT requests are reviewed and approved on a case by case basis. If you have questions about your eligibility for OPT, please meet with an advisor at International Student Services.

Processing Times

Normal processing time for ISS is 10 business days, from the date your academic advisor(s) submits the advisor portion of the e-form in MyGlobal. Processing time for USCIS varies.

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

Maintain Status on OPT

While you are on OPT, you are still in F-1 student status and your SEVIS record is still maintained by the University of Arizona. ISS will remain your point of contact for all immigration questions and requests related to your F-1 record.

While you are on OPT, it is your responsibility to take the following actions to maintain your status:

- Only work during the validity period of your EAD. Working off campus without authorization is a violation of your status which will result in your I-20 being terminated without the option for reinstatement.

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

Continued...

- Only work in jobs related to your major field of study (paid, unpaid or volunteer positions). For information about the types of employment you can accept on OPT, review the [Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\) OPT Policy Guidance.](#)
- Work an average of at least 20 hours per week
- Do not accrue more than 90 days of unemployment (post-completion OPT only)
- Report all changes to your address, employment information, visa status or permanent departure from the U.S. within 10 days of the change read more under [OPT Reporting](#)).
- If you enroll in classes, it must only be for recreational or avocational purposes. Your OPT will be automatically terminated if you transfer to another school or begin study at another education level. [Read more at USCIS.gov.](#)

Travel while OPT is pending

- If your application for post-completion OPT is pending and your I-20 end date has passed, travel with caution. If your OPT is approved, you will be expected to have your EAD card in hand when you reenter. Read [Can I reenter if my request for OPT is pending?](#) for more information.
- If you have additional questions, [meet with an international student advisor](#) to discuss your specific situation.

Travel During Post-Completion OPT

Details about the required documents for re-entry during post-completion OPT:

- I-20: You must have a valid travel signature to reenter the United States. During post-completion OPT, travel signatures are only valid for 6 months.
- Passport: Your passport must be valid 6 months into the future from the date of your entry into the U.S.
- Visa: You must have a valid F-1 visa to reenter the U.S., unless you are a citizen of Bermuda or Canada. If your visa has expired and you are traveling to Canada, Mexico or an adjacent island for less than 30 days, you may be eligible for **automatic visa revalidation.**
- EAD: The bottom of the card says “not valid for reentry to the U.S.” This statement means that the EAD card alone is not sufficient documentation for entry to the U.S.
- Employer Letter: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement recommends carrying a letter of employment if you have one (read **Can I reenter if I left while on OPT?**).

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

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ISS holds OPT workshops each semester to explain the application process and regulations affecting OPT in detail. They are open to all students. Check your university email and the **Programs & Events Calendar** for dates.

Last workshop = April 2025

OPT Workshop



ISS Hosted Workshop on Zoom.

This workshop is for F-1 students interested in applying for authorization to work in the United States after graduation.

H-1B VISAS

This is an extremely popular work visa. It is available to foreign nationals who (a) have at least a U.S. Bachelor's Degree or foreign equivalent and (b) will be working in a job that requires at least a Bachelor's Degree. Allows employment for 6 years, or longer.

See info here: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/immigration/h1b>

For employers:

Timing: Normal processing times will take several months. However, USCIS has special “premium processing” which guarantees processing in 15 business days, but requires an extra \$2,805 filing fee.

Cost: USCIS' filing fees for employers with more than 25 full-time employees are \$3,380 (\$2,460 if the employer is nonprofit). For employers with 25 or fewer full-time employees, the filing fees are \$2,010 (\$1,710 if the employer is nonprofit). Filing fees for nonprofit university employers, primary/secondary schools, and certain governmental and non-profit research organizations (i.e., “cap exempt” employers) are \$960.

H-1B VISAS

H-1B Cap: USCIS has a quota of 85,000 new H-1Bs to allocate each year (USCIS year—Oct. 1 through Sept. 30), of which 20,000 go to graduates with U.S. advanced degrees.

To claim a quota number, employers submit electronic case registrations with USCIS in March along with a \$215 fee. If the registration is selected, employers will have 90 days to file the H-1B for an Oct. 1 start date.

Exceptions to the quota: University jobs; non-profits affiliated with universities; non-profit research organizations; H-1B extension with same employer; H-1B transfer to new employer. Citizens of Chile and Singapore have a special allocation of H-1Bs.

H-1B VISAS

Can I change jobs after I get my H-1B?

An H-1B approval is employer-specific. It permits an H-1B status holder to work only for the employer that filed the petition. If you decide to change employers, the new employer must apply for the H-1B on your behalf. Consult with an immigration attorney if you are planning to terminate your employment or learn that your employment is being terminated. The H-1B is also position-specific. Therefore, if your H 1B employer wishes to significantly change your job duties or other conditions of employment after securing approval of your H-1B petition, the employer is required to submit an amended petition to the USCIS. In both of these cases, under certain conditions, you MAY be eligible to be paid in the new position after the employer has received the USCIS receipt notice for the H-1B petition (this is called "H-1B portability").

[Source link](#)

H-1B VISAS

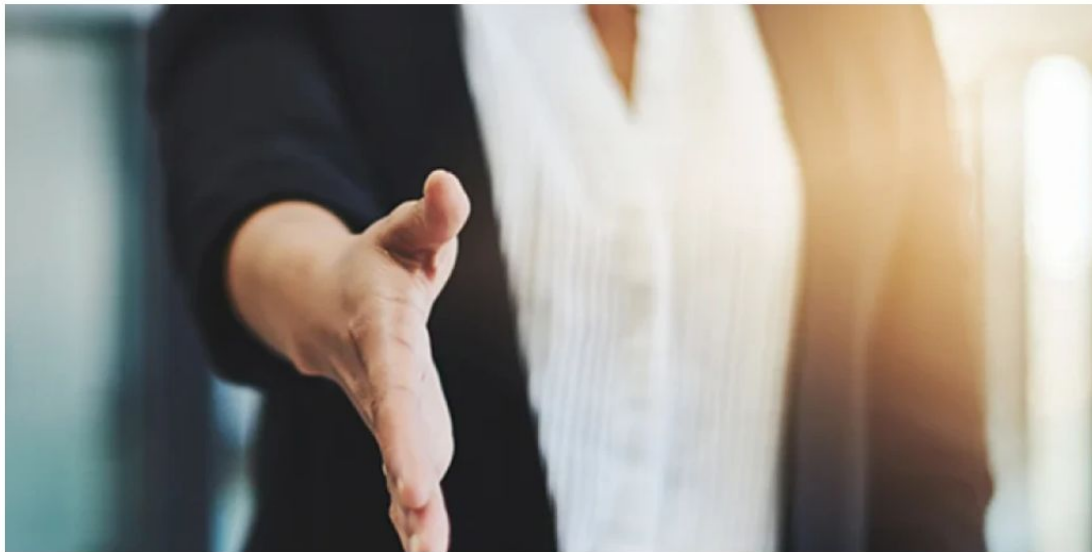
Changing from OPT to H-1B

- Lottery registration in March
- New H-1B visas are effective in October
- For an H-1B, you must have an employer sponsor
- There is an annual limit on the number of new H-1B petitions that can be approved in any given year. This annual limit is referred to as the H-1B Cap:
 - 65,000 regular
 - 20,000 additional for Master's or higher
- See more information here:
<https://www.visapro.com/resources/article/change-of-status-opt-to-h1b/>

H-1B VISAS

February 2026 meeting →
[attachments here](#)

Work Visas Made Easy



Join us for a virtual seminar on immigration options for international students who wish to stay and work in the United States after graduation. The presenter is Jonathan Moore, an experienced immigration attorney who represents companies all over the U.S., processing work visas and green cards for international employees. Topics he will discuss include Optional Practical Training, STEM extensions, H-1B visas (including the electronic registration process), and other common work-visa options used by U.S. employers to hire international grads. He will also discuss issues regarding permanent-resident green cards for those who may qualify. There will be time for questions following the session.

Sponsor

An H-1B sponsor is a U.S. employer that petitions USCIS to hire foreign professionals in "specialty occupations" requiring at least a bachelor's degree. Large technology, consulting, and engineering firms frequently sponsor H-1B visas. Top sponsors include tech firms like Amazon, Google, and Cognizant.

The H-1B program applies to employers seeking to hire nonimmigrant aliens as workers in specialty occupations or as fashion models of distinguished merit and ability.

The law establishes certain standards in order to protect similarly employed U.S. workers from being adversely affected by the employment of the nonimmigrant workers, as well as to protect the H-1B nonimmigrant workers.

How to find a sponsor

Finding an H-1B sponsor involves targeting companies with a history of sponsorship.

- Use databases like the USCIS Employer Data Hub, [H1BGrader](#), and [MyVisaJobs](#).
- Focus on tech hubs, large corporations (e.g., Amazon, Cognizant, Google, Microsoft), and cap-exempt organizations like universities.
- Utilize LinkedIn, Indeed, and tools like Interstride to filter for "visa sponsorship".
- YC's job board: <https://www.workatastartup.com/>
- VC job boards (there are many like these)
 - <https://wellfound.com/>
 - <https://jobs.a16z.com/jobs>
 - <https://jobs.southparkcommons.com/jobs>
- Another interesting one, GitHub repos like this with jobs: <https://github.com/SimplifyJobs/Summer2026-Internships>

Other Strategies:

- Find Similar Profiles: Use LinkedIn to find professionals in your field who have similar international backgrounds to see which companies hired them.
- Targeted Outreach: Connect with professionals in your field working in the US to inquire about their company's sponsorship culture.
- Leverage Internships: Secure internships at companies that have a history of sponsoring, as this can be a direct path to a full-time, sponsored position

H-1B Visa Sponsor Checker Web Extensions

Social Security Number

The SSN is a nine-digit number issued by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for Federal tax purposes only. It does not entitle you to social security benefits and does not change your immigration status or grant employment authorization.

You are only eligible to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) if you have on-campus employment or authorization to work off campus. If you have on-campus employment, such as a student worker position or graduate assistantship, International Student Services (ISS) will provide you a letter (a Social Security Letter for F-1 students and a J-1 Employment Authorization letter for J-1 students) to take to Social Security Administration (SSA) to apply for your SSN.

Looking forward...

Article: [How the \\$100K H-1B Fee Is Transforming the 2026 Lottery: Employer Strategy, Wage Prioritization, and Talent Shifts](#)

Keep up with the news and how policies are changing!



Slides available in the
“Past Meetings” tab of
the TIMESTEP website.