

# JOB SEARCH PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Many international students are interested in working in the United States after they graduate. According to U.S. immigration law, international students with F-1 visas are eligible to work full time for 36 months after they graduate as part of their practical training, if they are working in STEM industries. International students who are not working in STEM industries may only work full time after they graduate for 12 months. Note: this is a one time 12-month extension; it is only for use with one degree level. After completing their practical training, international students must be sponsored by an employer in order to continue working in the United States with an H-1B visa. Please visit the International House for more detailed information on visas.

International students seeking employment after graduation may consider the following five options:

1. Work with an American-based organization
2. Work with a multinational corporation
3. Work in the public or private sector in your home country
4. Work in the public or private sector of another country
5. Decide not to work right away and instead continue in school for another degree

## The Process for International Students: Internships & Undergraduate Co-ops

1. Get your application materials ready:
  - a. Resume critique with the Career Development Center.
    - i. Avoid personal data such as birthday, religion, home country, visa status
    - ii. Review the **Resume Writing** tipsheet.
  - b. Cover Letter critique with the Career Development Center.
    - i. Write your cover letter to the hiring manager or human resource contact.
    - ii. Review the **Cover Letter** tipsheet.
2. Attend a CDC Workshop or internship/co-op/job search appointment to learn tips and strategies to find opportunities.
3. Practice interviewing with a mock interview (60 minutes) or interview skills (30 minutes) appointment.
  - a. It is recommended that students have a nice suit for interviews.
  - b. Direct eye contact is important with company interviews.
4. For internships (undergraduate students only):
  - a. Internships must be related to your major and paid.



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- b. Internships must be between 8-12 weeks in duration.
  - c. After receiving an offer, report your internship to the CDC through Handshake:
    - i. Visit **Resources** in Handshake to view instructions on how to report your experience.
5. For The Undergraduate Co-op Program (undergraduate students only):
- a. Co-ops must be related to your major and paid. As part of your practical training, you can do a Co-op on your F-1 visa. You do not need any additional sponsorship.
  - b. Co-ops must be between 4-8 months in length.
    - i. You will not take classes while on co-op. If you wish to, you will need to complete a petition.
  - c. After receiving an offer, report your co-op to the CDC via Handshake:
    - i. Visit **Resources** in Handshake to view instructions on how to report your experience.
    - ii. You will need to have a specific start and end date for the co-op.

## The Process for Full-time Jobs: Approaching the Topic of H-1B Visas with Employers

International students are very qualified to find and secure employment in the U.S. Many employers are intimidated by the U.S. immigration process and might be reluctant to file for an H-1B visa because they are unfamiliar with the process. Therefore, the best thing an international student can do is to understand the process and be able to talk about it and explain it to employers.

Do not begin a cover letter or interview by requesting work authorization or an H-1B visa. Let the employer get to know you and feel that you are the best candidate for the position. Discussions about the H-1B policy should come later, either when the employer inquires about employment authorization or when you are offered a position. Your first task in the application process or the interview is for you to convince the employer that you are the best candidate for the job. Only later, after an employer makes an offer or is close to making an offer, should you bring up information on the H-1B process.

The Career Development Center and International House recommend that international students and graduates learn as much as possible about the H-1B visa. The H-1B visa is special to your occupation. Employers file the H-1B visa, NOT the employee. The position must be at a competitive wage.

It is important to remember to inform the employer that you learn quickly, want to work in the U.S. permanently, and that the H-1B visa is possible with the help of an immigration attorney. Make sure to market yourself by explaining your strengths and abilities. Emphasize how the company could benefit from your international background.

## Job Search Advice

### How to Find Job Openings in the United States

Conducting a job search in the U.S. can be quite different from doing so in your home country. In many other cultures, students find jobs through family connections and personal relationships. In the United States, job seekers are expected to start the search early, be self-reliant, and use a wide variety of resources to actively identify and pursue job opportunities.



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Only about 20% of the jobs in the U.S. are advertised in public places like Internet job boards. The other 80% are never advertised. These jobs, part of the “hidden job market,” are usually filled by referrals, inquiring about job opportunities, and word of mouth. You can find out about jobs like this through networking—the process of reaching out to people such as friends, classmates, neighbors, family members, WPI faculty, WPI alumni, and community members. Access the **Networking** tipsheet to learn more about networking.

Connect with others from your home country working in the U.S. LinkedIn, Alumni Connect, and Career Shift can help you research these contacts, along with WPI alumni from your home countries. You can access Careershift through the Resources section in Handshake. These would be great contacts with whom you can network and conduct informational interviews to gain insight into the field and advice from a fellow international student.

Contact your consulate’s office in the U.S. and find out which firms from your home country do business in the U.S. and vice versa. In addition, the CDC has a book called *Foreign Firms Operating in the U.S.* that can be helpful. This is a great way to target companies that would consider your background an asset and helpful for the company’s business practices. Research your field and identify companies with business interests in your home country. You can then sell your educational and cultural experiences to the company.

Research U.S. companies and industries. Identify which industries have a shortage in qualified candidates. This would be a great place to start looking for companies.

**The Bureau of Labor Statistics-Occupational Outlook Handbook** and **O\*Net** are two great resources to help you explore this. In addition, **where-are-the-jobs.com** can help you explore various areas of the U.S. to identify where the most jobs are by occupation.

## Working for International

## Companies

Many international students and graduates find that their best employment prospects are working for international companies. International students are great assets to companies that have international interests where language skills, respect for diversity, and knowledge of overseas economics is important. Some students begin working in another country, and then after a few years transition back to the U.S. Companies have an easier time hiring individuals to work in their home country and then transfer to the U.S. a few years later.

## Resources

### CDC Resources

- One-on-one appointment with CDC staff member.
- Resume and cover letter critiques.
- Job search and interviewing assistance (including Mock Interviews) during drop-in hours.
- GoinGlobal: Access GoinGlobal in Handshake to see a list of companies that have filed H-1B petitions in the last year. In addition, you can search and apply to jobs overseas, along with learning how to change your resume, cover letter, and job search strategies to fit the requirements of other countries.
- CDC website ([wpi.edu/+CDC](http://wpi.edu/+CDC)).

### International House Resources

- One-on-one appointment.
- Applications for Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT).
- *The Job Search Process in the U.S.* – a practical guide for international students.
- *It’s Easy to Hire an International Student* – a clarification of U.S. Policies.



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- International House website ([wpi.edu/Admin/ISS](http://wpi.edu/Admin/ISS)).

## Gordon Library Resources

On the Gordon Library website, go to “Course & Research Help,” “Subject Listings,” and access the **Company Information** guide to learn about global companies and other helpful data.

## Online Job Search Resources

**culturalvistas.org** – a site that has been facilitating connections between Americans and international visitors for over 60 years.

**foreignMBA.com** – a site with useful information for international MBA students as well as other international students who would like to work in the United States; includes career profiles, corporate interviews, immigration information, lists of companies who have hired MBAs, and more, at no charge.

**h1base.com** – database of employers that have offered H-1B sponsorship (there is a cost for this database).

**internationalstudent.com** – a site started by a group of international students living in New York City with the goal of helping other students deal with American immigration authorities and education system.

**intlcareers.org** – site of the International Careers Consortium, which provides advice on job searching for international students.

**overseasjobs.com** – international jobs database of positions available in companies around the world; also provides job search resources.

**shmba.org** – site of the National Society of Hispanic MBAs, an organization that fosters Hispanics’ leadership through graduate management education and professional development; they also organize an annual

conference and career expo for Hispanic students in the United States.

**uscis.gov** – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services homepage, with information about H-1B status and filing for a Green Card.

## Selling Your International Background

Remember that the #1 skill employers look for when hiring is verbal and written communication. Therefore it is important that all your resumes and cover letters are error free, and that you take time to practice your interview skills. It is very important to convey the following traits: analytical skills, assertiveness and enthusiasm, technical knowledge, responsibility and maturity, intellectual ability, and interpersonal skills.

International students have a number of assets and advantages that domestic students don’t have. These can be used to turn employers’ objections into positives. Companies can use international students as an advantage as they know other languages, and have knowledge of overseas’ economies.

## Ethics

It is important that you do not misrepresent your employment status in your Handshake account, on your resume, on an application, or at any time. Should you misrepresent yourself in Handshake, it could result in your account being suspended, and your On Campus Interviewing privileges being taken away.

It is your responsibility to know U.S. Regulations. Use appropriate behavior in conducting your job search; be professional and polite at all times. When you accept an offer of employment, you are committed to that company and should withdraw all other applications.



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## You Can Get a Job!

Patience and persistence are important to a successful job search. Although finding employment as an international student can be a challenge, it is not impossible! It is important to start searching for your full time job two semesters before graduating. Make sure your resume and cover letter are in the style of the country in which you are seeking to work and live. GoinGlobal can provide resources on other countries' resumes, cover letters, and interview styles along with additional resources.

Make sure to always market yourself positively. Talk about the challenges of studying and living in another country and how you overcame them; this shows your resourcefulness. Tell an employer how hiring an international employee benefits the team and company. Understand that you will know more about immigration laws than the employer. Therefore, practice how you will explain your work eligibility.

Always have a plan! Have an alternative plan as well in case you are not hired by a company in the U.S. This might mean returning home for a year or two to work at a company that has locations in the U.S., and then transferring to the U.S. after you have proven what a great employee you are to the employer. It might mean considering other countries in which you would want to work, or returning home.

The CDC looks forward to working with you to support your internship, co-op, and job search process.

**Career Development Center**  
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[wpi.edu/+cdc](http://wpi.edu/+cdc)

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