

HIRING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



Calvin's international student population offers an excellent source of self-motivated, intellectually curious talent, with the global perspective many organizations crave. Hiring international students for internships and for work after graduation is not complicated, though rules vary depending on a student's enrollment status. Check out these FAQs, and feel free to contact Brent Wilkinson, Calvin's Immigration Coordinator, with additional questions at bw28@calvin.edu.

FAQS RELATED TO CURRENT STUDENTS

What does my organization need to do to hire an international student intern? All students can get work authorization called Curricular Practical Training (CPT) after completing their first academic year. All that your organization needs to do is draft a letter on letterhead addressed to Calvin's Immigration Coordinator with contact information, start and end dates, a brief description of the student's role, and a signature. Your intern will ask you for this letter and provide you with a template as part of their authorization process.

What are the requirements for getting CPT authorization?

The student has:

- Declared their major
- Secured an internship/work experience required for the major or for a course in the major
- Acquired an employment letter and completed the requisite paperwork

What does "required for the major or for a course in the major" mean?

Students must receive credit in their major for the internship through an internship course, independent study, or any other course for which an internship must be completed to get credit. (Note: at Calvin, the Kinesiology major requires work experience that is not also required for a course, so this experience counts for CPT).

Under what circumstances do students need to get CPT?

CPT is required for all paid off-campus internships and work experiences in the U.S. for current students. On-campus work does not require CPT unless it is work for an organization other than Calvin. Internships occurring entirely outside the U.S. do not require CPT.

What about unpaid internships?

If the internship is required for the student's major or for a course in the major, the student should still get CPT. No authorization is required for unpaid shadowing or volunteering for non-profit organizations, which is "true volunteering" by Department of Labor standards.

Can a student accept unpaid work so CPT is not needed?

No. Sometimes students want to volunteer before or after their authorization period to extend the experience, but this is still considered employment by the government and is not legal.

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How long does it take to get CPT?

If all criteria are met and the paperwork is submitted, it takes 2-3 business days to get authorization. Students should apply 2-3 weeks before they begin their internship if possible. Students may not start the internship until they have received an updated I-20 with CPT authorization.

Is there a limit on how long a student can do CPT?

No, but students should consult the immigration coordinator about internships longer than a semester since many factors come into play. In most cases, CPT authorization must be renewed each semester, and the student must be enrolled in a course requiring the internship each semester.

FAQS RELATED TO RECENT GRADUATES

Does my company need to do anything special to hire a recent graduate?

International students approved for Optional Practical Training (OPT) do not require special paperwork from the employer. They may work during the dates indicated on their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) after completing an I-9 like any other employee.

How long may recent graduates work?

All students qualify for twelve months of OPT authorization after they graduate. Students in STEM fields may also apply for a 24-month extension, for a total of 3 years of authorization.

Who can qualify for the STEM OPT extension?

The Department of Homeland Security publishes a list of qualifying majors: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>
Interested students and employers may confirm their eligibility with Calvin's Immigration Coordinator before applying.

How can my company hire a student on the STEM OPT extension?

Your company must work with the student to fill out form I-983 at the beginning of the STEM OPT employment: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/i983.pdf>
Graduates approved for the STEM OPT extension may only work at employers who are participating in E-Verify: <https://www.e-verify.gov/>

Who can I contact with questions?

Contact Calvin's immigration coordinator, Brent Wilkinson, at bw28@calvin.edu or (616) 526-6897. Brent can provide you with CPT forms, which are also [online](#) under the heading "Options for Off-campus Employment."