



BRUIN ACTUARIAL SOCIETY

International Student Guide, 2nd Ed 2018

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Visa Sponsorship

Familiarity with company hiring policy is essential. General information about working in the U.S. can be acquired from Dashew Center.

So you've heard of the American Dream. You are told that if you know what you want, and work hard towards the goal, this country will eventually reward you. And that is probably why you joined BAS, because BAS is one of the most motivated student organizations geared towards their profession. Congratulations, you are off to a good start!

Nevertheless, there is one more thing you need to have in order to thrive in the U.S. - visa sponsorship. By immigration law, foreign students need to be sponsored by a company. The approval from the immigration authority can be unpredictable. It is not uncommon for outstanding foreign students who work with prestigious firms to get rejected without much explanation. The process is so arbitrary that many firms have decided to avoid this risk.

As a result, your chances only lie in companies that sponsor international students. It varies from company to company. The same company might even change their hiring policy over time.

Some firms explicitly say that they don't sponsor visas, so you don't need to waste your efforts challenging their firm policy. Some firms are ambiguous about their policies, and you may get a chance if they really like you and are willing to spend money on you. Only a few big firms are open to visa sponsorship. The competition for international students can be big, because you need to be better than citizens and residents to be considered. Grades and exams may not be an issue for you, but you need to stand out in other soft skills even if English is your second language. No one wants to work with someone who is shy and can't explain complicated actuarial concepts to laymen. So practice speaking English more often and come out of your comfort zone!

Don't be discouraged by companies that won't sponsor. A decent number of BAS alumni from foreign countries have found actuarial jobs here. Take advantage of networking events, pay attention to seniors and alumni who have similar backgrounds, and ask the right questions and learn from them.

Remember the Law of Large Numbers (in Exam P)? From a statistical standpoint, your true ability is manifested when the number of trials is large enough. In another words, be persistent. Keep trying. To find a job, you only need one team that sees your potential.

The best chance for an international student to get a job is to be more qualified than others. Visa sponsorship is a big cost for firms, and you need to convince them that you are worth the money and effort.

How to Succeed as an International Student

Make full use of UCLA resources

Career Center

- Have your resume professionally critiqued by a career counselor. Within five days, you will receive constructive feedbacks and advice specifically geared to enhancing your resume for your job targets.
- Attend online resume writing workshop posted on BruinView. Workshops are open only to currently enrolled UCLA students.
- Schedule an appointment through BruinView (Counseling Appointments tab). Appointments are visible up to two weeks in advance. All career topics are covered, but not limited to, career counseling, pre-professional/grad school, mock interview, personal statement, resume/cover letter, job or internship search.

Undergraduate Writing Center

- Check their website for announcements and activities for international students.
- Make appointments at the Writing Center to have your writing tasks edited and revised by professional counselors.

BAS

- Check our website frequently for the latest announcements on workshops, firms' information sessions and career fair.
- Make appointments with BAS officers to arrange for mock interviews and resume/cover letter critiques.

Market your global perspectives

- Being an international student, you have exposure to more than one culture. Market your background as an asset instead of a liability. Many recruiters are looking for people who come with innovative ideas. They are willing to know what new things and changes you can bring to their companies.
- Be confident to talk about your past experience in working with people from different backgrounds. You have advantages in cross-cultural communication skills and being fluent in multiple languages

Network! Network! Network!

- Many international students focus too much on getting perfect GPAs while neglecting the importance of networking. However, networking is definitely one of the top things on the checklist that you should pay great effort in developing.
- Build network with current undergraduates, graduated alumni and firm representatives.

Suggestions to build your network

- Attend events such as career fairs/banquets/firm information sessions
- Talk to as many people as possible. You should not be satisfied with just "knowing" the person. You should leave an impression.
- Write follow-up emails after attending these events.
- Ask questions of good quality to keep in touch.
- Be sure to say hi when you meet them again.

CPT (Curricular Practical Training)

“Can you legally work in the US?” If you get this question, be confident and say yes. CPT and OPT are the work authorizations for internship and full time respectively. But if they ask if you need sponsorship, you’ll also have to say yes, if looking for full time. CPT allows you to participate in off campus internship during school year, and OPT authorizes you to work in US after graduation for a certain period of time. Please read the following sections for more details.

Basic Information about CPT

Qualifications and Restrictions

- CPT allows you (with F-1 visa) to engage in off campus internship relevant to your major while you are enrolled as a full-time student
- Must be in valid F-1 status for at least one academic year
- Must have an employment offer directly related to your field of study
- Must maintain full-time enrollment while you engage in CPT (for academic year)
- Must apply for CPT each quarter since CPT authorization will only be granted one quarter at a time
- Keep an internship class (e.g. 195 CE) during the quarter with CPT

Steps for CPT application

- Go to Dashew Center for the [CPT request form](#)
- Ask your employer for an employment verification or offer letter
- Enroll in an internship or individual studies course* (see the next section)
- Submit your completed CPT request form with offer letter after your enrollment in internship class

Internship Courses

- **Course’s basics**
 - Undergraduates in College of Letters and Sciences: 195 CE internship courses
 - Topics’ range: English, History, Political Science, Sociology, ext.
 - Format: weekly writings; bi-weekly meetings with a coordinator; final paper
- **Requirements**
 - Junior or Senior status: must have at least 90 units completed and 3.0 GPA (Sophomores who have more than 90 units and at least 3.0 GPA are also eligible to apply for 195 CE)
 - Must work off-campus for an internship at least 8 hours per week (internships can be either paid or unpaid)
- **Enrollment**
 - Go to UCLA Center for Community Learning at A265 Murphy Hall or call 310-825-7867 to schedule a meeting with a Coordinator (cannot be completed through MyUCLA)
 - Obtain the signature of your internship’s supervisor
 - Obtain approval from your Coordinator at A265 Murphy Hall
 - Enrollment must be completed before the Friday of Week 2 each quarter

(For more details about CPT, see Dashew Center’s Website)

OPT (Optional Practical Training)

Basic Information about OPT

Qualifications and Restrictions

- OPT allows you (with F-1 visa) to engage in employment in the U.S. **directly related to your field of study after graduation**
- Do not need an employer offer to apply for OP (**WARNING:** But your later OPT employment should be directly related to your degree program and appropriate to your degree level)
- Must have maintained valid F-1 status for at least one academic year
- Must not have had 12-months of OPT authorization for the same degree level

Steps for OPT application

- Complete the OPT Online [Workshop](#)
- Prepare and complete OPT application forms and materials* (see the next session)
- Submit completed OPT application at an OPT Hand-In Session (or book an appointment with an F-1 Counselor to submit your OPT application)
- You must return to DCISS 1 week after your submission date to sign their OPT I-20. (**WARNING:** Failure to sign the OPT I-20 on time will result in cancellation of the OPT application)

*OPT application forms and materials (please read [Online Workshop](#) carefully)

\$40 Online SEVIS User Fee Receipt (Log in to your DCISS account to pay the fee)	\$380.00 check or money order payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security
OPT Request Form	I-765 Form
Verification of Degree Completion Form	2 U.S. style passport photos
2 copies of your I-94 Admission Record	2 copies of your most recent U.S. admission stamp in passport
1 copy of pages 1&3 of all CPT I-20s (if applicable)	1 copy of passport ID page

Timeline (IMPORTANT)

- You may apply for your initial 12-months OPT 3 months before degree completion date (**WARNING:** USCIS requires approximately 90 days to process your application, so apply as early as possible. Also, you cannot leave US during those 90 days; otherwise, your OPT application might be canceled)
- Your requested OPT start date can be as early as 1 day after your program completion date, but no later than 60 days after your program completion date

OPT Extension for STEM majors

- From May 10th 2016, students in [STEM](#) programs can apply for 24-months OPT STEM extension after the original 12 months. Therefore, STEM majors' students (including our actuarial science major) can work in US after graduation for **36** (12+24) months.

Must have authorization for the initial 12-month OPT
Must have a job offer or be employed by an employer registered with the " E-Verify " federal employment verification system
You can apply 120 days before your initial 12-month OPT's end date (Keep in mind: USCIS requires approximately 3 months to approve an OPT STEM Extension application)
With an authorized 24-month OPT STEM extension, you are allowed to be unemployed for 150 days
If you have applied for OPT STEM extension after you finish your bachelor degree, but also completes another higher-level STEM degree (e.g. master degree), you are allowed to apply for the second time OPT STEM extension for another 24 months

Resources

Dashew Center's Website - CPT

<http://www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu/home/F1Visa/147/160/CptIntro>

Dashew Center's Website - OPT

<http://www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu/home/F1Visa/134/163/OptIntro>

CPT Request Form

<http://www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu/Content/files/f1/CPTRequest.pdf>

OPT Online Workshop

<http://www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu/home/F1Visa/134/164/OptWorkshop>

OPT Request Form

<http://www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu/Content/files/f1/OPTRRequestForm.pdf>

STEM OPT Extension Guidelines

<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>

STEM Designated Degree Program List

<https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf>

"E-Verify" Federal Employment Verification System

<https://www.e-verify.gov/>