

Handshake FAQ for International Students

How do I know if U.S. employers will consider me for a job or internship opportunity?

Employers enter their preferences in Handshake regarding international applicants when they post a job or internship opportunity. Handshake asks two key questions of employers when posting:

*** Eligibility for international students (non-US citizens or permanent residents)**

Would you sponsor a [work visa](#) for the right candidate?

Yes No

Would you hire international students seeking opportunities in their field of study? ([OPT](#) and/or [CPT](#) eligible. Note: OPT/CPT requires no immigration sponsorship by an employer.)

Yes No

Separating these two questions allows employers to indicate if they are willing to accept candidates for internships (CPT), shorter full-time opportunities (OPT), or work sponsorship (e.g. H1b).

Employers may also indicate their policy regarding international student applicants directly in the job description. A careful review of the job description in Handshake or with an employer's careers page will often indicate this information.

You will be able to see your eligibility for an opportunity in the employer preferences box for each posting. (Examples are below.) It's important to note that Handshake will not block you from applying to an opportunity if you do not match a preference.

Employer Preferences

You match all of Thrivent Financial's preferences

- Majors
- GPA
- School Year
- Work Authorization

Employer Preferences

You don't match some of this employer's preferences

- Majors
- GPA
- School Year
- Work Authorization
This employer has requested US sponsorship, and this job is not sponsoring candidates.

Employers are less likely to interview you if your **work authorization** doesn't match their preferences.

How does Handshake determine that my work authorization matches an employer preference for a U.S.-based job or internship opportunity?

Prior to August 13, 2018, Handshake identified your work authorization based on your visa status in your profile. This process has changed and Handshake will no longer base your work authorization eligibility on visa status. Instead, you will be prompted to answer the following broader question (question two below) related to work authorization during your first application in Handshake which will then be saved for future applications.

Apply to ABC Company ✕

Applying for Customer Success Manager requires a resume. Attach it below and get one step closer to your next job!

1. Attach your resume

or

2. Work Authorization

Are you legally authorized to be employed in the United States?

Yes No

Will you now or in the future require visa sponsorship?

Yes No

Prefer not to answer these questions.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you select ‘prefer not to answer these questions’, you will appear to the employer as FULLY QUALIFIED for positions in Handshake but employers will be able to see that the answers to these questions are unknown.

If an employer indicates they will not consider international applicants, should I bother applying?

Handshake will not prevent you from applying to any opportunity on the basis of an employer preference. (Such as GPA, Major, or Work Authorization)

If you find an opportunity with an employer that does not consider international applicants you could still apply and may even be contacted for an interview if you otherwise meet the required qualifications. At this point, they likely do not know if you are an international applicant unless you were required to answer a direct question on their career site. This could be a strategy to showcase yourself as a strong candidate and hope that the employer will consider you despite your international student status. This practice is generally discouraged except in unique circumstances, such as when you have strong connections in the organization or feel you have unique qualifications that are likely above other applicants.

Employers do not like surprises and expect honesty throughout the hiring process. You will eventually have to disclose the nature of your work authorization, so you do have to consider your time and energy as it relates to pursuing opportunities with a small chance of success. Also, this strategy can be risky in that the employer may see this as an intentional omission that may reflect negatively on you and undermine your chances anyway.

There don't seem to be many opportunities open to International Students. Why is this?

The landscape regarding employment opportunities for international students in the U.S. – as with most countries – is relatively complex. Employers are often reluctant to consider international students because of uncertainty created by the limits within the immigration system. Opportunities in Handshake are a reflection of the realities in the labor market, the legal framework around work authorization, and of the political administration in power.

It's important to keep the right perspective about your F-1 student status. Your F-1 student visa is permission to enter the U.S. to pursue a program of academic study. It is not a “back door” to employment or immigration to the U.S. CPT and OPT are work authorizations available to provide for practical experiences related to your field of study but they do not indicate a guarantee of employment.

Why is there not a list in of employers who will consider international students?

In theory, this is a good idea but it is very difficult to create and maintain in practice. Many employers are unwilling to disclose this information directly and their policies are always changing which makes a list unsustainable and unreliable. Unfortunately, there is not a single easy way to identify opportunities so a creative, multi-pronged strategy is essential to identify eligible opportunities.

In addition to Handshake, what are some alternative online resources to help me find opportunities?

- *Interstride* is an online and app-based tool designed to assist international students studying in the U.S. by provided job & internships search tools, as well as other resources related to U.S. markets. If you do not have an account for Interstride, please email Bryan Shealer (shealer).
- *GoinGlobal* is an online resource that may be useful for global job and internship searches, as well as career information for individual countries. GoinGlobal can be accessed from campus. To access off-campus you will need to create an account first on campus.
- Use filters in Handshake to narrow your search down by industry. Certain industries are more likely to sponsor than others – these include: Consulting, Technology/IT, and Finance. Larger global corporations and corporations on the east or west coasts are also more likely to sponsor.
- You can sort a search in Handshake to only show opportunities open to international students. You can do this by navigating to: **Jobs → Show Advanced Options → Categories → US Authorization Optional.**
- The [St. Olaf International Students CPT Database](#) is a resource where you can learn more about internships that previous international students have done with CPT.
- Staffing agencies, contract, or short-term opportunities are likely to be more open to you.
- Consider joining the LinkedIn Group: [St. Olaf College Career Network: International Students and Alumni](#)