



HIRING INTERNATIONAL PERSONNEL (A quick guide for department managers)

As the hiring season begins for the next fiscal year, department managers are reminded that sponsoring international candidates for employment-based visa status can take time, money, and include reporting and compliance requirements beyond those needed for a U.S. employee. IPSO has assembled this guide to assist departments in navigating the immigration sponsorship process to minimize issues in the hiring of international personnel.

AM I REQUIRED TO SPONSOR AN INTERNATIONAL CANDIDATE FOR A VISA?

No department is under any obligation to provide sponsorship for an employment-based visa status. The department may decide it does not have the financial or administrative resources to sponsor an international candidate who requires such status to work at AU. However, any candidate who does require sponsorship must be processed through IPSO, with the department providing all associated costs and reporting obligations.

WHAT CAN I ASK A CANDIDATE ABOUT THEIR VISA?

Only two questions regarding immigration status are permissible before a job offer is made:

1. Are you currently authorized for employment in the U.S.? Yes or No.
2. Will you now or in the future require sponsorship for a nonimmigrant visa? Yes or No.

I HAVE A CANDIDATE WHO APPEARS TO REQUIRE SPONSORSHIP. NOW WHAT DO I DO?

It is best to refrain from extending an offer to any candidate who might require sponsorship until you have consulted with IPSO. Sponsorship requirements could require adjustments in salary or start date or, in some cases, preclude employment eligibility for the considered position altogether.

Your first step in any sponsorship process is to visit the IPSO website at <https://www.augusta.edu/ipso/>

Here, you will find all the information you need regarding immigration sponsorship, as well as the two requests which departments will use to get clarification on what would be required to hire their international candidate. **For the best service, please fill out these forms completely.**

[Interview Consultation Request](#) (when you are still in the interview or final candidates consideration stage of the process)

This can be used by department chairs, search committee chairs, or hiring unit managers to request that

an IPSO staff member participate in the interview process to aid in determining if a candidate for AU employment may have immigration needs, to provide an analysis of those needs and early intervention to promote timely response and cost management.

[Immigration Consultation Request Form](#) (once a candidate has been selected and seems likely to accept)

This can be used by mentors and department managers to request an immigration assessment for any personnel, scholar, or visitor you wish to employ or host at Augusta University.

Submitting a fully completed request will provide the details necessary for IPSO to make an informed decision about an appropriate start date, salary, position title, and expense to the department, saving the department and IPSO time compared to lengthy email correspondence over immigration status options.

I HAVE SUBMITTED THE REQUEST. WHAT NEXT?

IPSO typically will respond to any request within 48 hours.

For [interview consultation](#) requests, the response will include IPSO availability for interview itineraries. Once the candidate is interviewed by IPSO, an assessment will be provided to the department, outlining next steps in the sponsorship process.

For [immigration consultation](#) requests, the response will include which type of status is appropriate for the candidate, as well as a realistic start date for their hire. The request will also include a link to the appropriate department request to start the sponsorship process. **Please note, all department requests require a department user that has been trained and registered in the IPSO software system, AU International. To request AU International training, please contact Tiffany Takahashi at ttakahashi@augusta.edu.**

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF COMMON EMPLOYER-SPONSORED VISA STATUS.

A detailed description of all employer-sponsored statuses can be found on our website at <https://www.augusta.edu/ipso/info-faculty-administrators.php> Below are key points on common statuses for departments to consider regarding international applicants:

F-1 Post-Completion OPT

Most recent international graduates of U.S. institutions are eligible for twelve months of *post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)* in a job related to their field of study. They work with the Designated School Official at their graduating institution to secure their Employment Authorization Document (EAD), which will give them employment eligibility for one year. This does not require any administrative action or financial support from the hiring department. However, these candidates will not be able to begin work at AU until they have their EAD in hand. Departments are advised to take full advantage of a graduate's *post-completion OPT* eligibility.

F-1 STEM OPT EXTENSION

International graduates in STEM fields are eligible for an additional 24 months of employment eligibility (aka *STEM OPT*) after the initial *post-completion OPT*. While there is no financial burden to the department, there are reporting and salary requirements which require input from department managers and the employee's supervisor. This extension process should be started no later than three months prior to the employee's *post-completion OPT* expiration date. For more information on this process, please visit: <https://www.augusta.edu/ipso/stem-opt-employees.php>

H-1B STATUS

H-1B status is an employment-based visa status to sponsor international candidates for certain eligible positions. It is designed for "specialty occupations," which require a degree in a specific field. H-1B status has rigid salary requirements, processing times of 3-6 months, and requires departments to pay fees of \$960 to \$3460. Candidates have a maximum allowed time of six years in H-1B status, after which they will likely need to secure employment eligibility through permanent residency. For more information, please visit: <https://www.augusta.edu/ipso/h1b-visa-sponsorship.php#h1bprocessing>

J-1 STATUS

In some circumstances, a J-1 exchange visitor may be eligible for employment in certain positions. Departments should be aware such status often incurs a two-year home residence requirement, which candidates will need to overcome in order to continue residence in the U.S. The J program typically has a limit of five years. For more information, please visit: <https://www.augusta.edu/ipso/j1-exchange-visitors.php>

EVERY CANDIDATE'S IMMIGRATION CIRCUMSTANCES ARE UNIQUE

A multitude of factors play into determining whether sponsorship is appropriate, including: the candidate's immigration history, country of origin, family circumstances, job duties, job requirements, and salary standards. Occasionally, what would work for a U.S. employee will not be feasible for an international candidate. The earlier you contact IPSO, the more options are typically available.

IPSO FEES

To offset rising IT costs for our immigration management software, IPSO charges a semiannual fee of \$100 to the hosting college for each department request received during the prior six-month period. Although this has remained constant for many years, it is subject to future and likely increase.