

Answering Common Employer Questions About Sponsorship

Visit UW-Madison's International Student Services for up-to-date information regarding CPT, OPT, and requirements for working and interning in the US: <https://iss.wisc.edu/>

Questions: “Do you need sponsorship?” “Do you need work authorization?” “Do you require sponsorship now or in the future?”

Your Answers:

- If you're seeking an **INTERNSHIP** with CPT available: “My education visa covers me for internships as long as they relate to my major. I don't need any authorization or sponsorship from an employer unless we would decide to extend my work for more than a year* after graduation.”
**3 years if you majored in a designated STEM field*
- If you're seeking **FULL-TIME** work with OPT available: “My education visa covers me for 'X' months after graduation, during which time I do not need authorization or sponsorship from my employer. To continue working beyond the time, my employer would have to file for a work visa for me, but I expect by that time I will have demonstrated my value and fit for the organization.”

When to Raise the Topic of Sponsorship

It is important to understand what most organizations mean when they ask something like “Will you require sponsorship?” as part of their application process. Many international students choose to answer “No” to this question, thinking they do not need sponsorship to work an internship or during their OPT period.

The problem with this approach is that no matter how the question is worded, most companies are actually asking if you will *eventually* need sponsorship if you continue to work for them long term. If a student chooses to answer “No,” employers may assume a student is being dishonest (Not a positive way to begin a productive relationship with a potential employer!). It is important to be clear with a potential employer about requiring sponsorship so they are not surprised after you accept an offer and fill out the legal offer paperwork.

How (and when) should you disclose your sponsorship status to an employer?

- If a question is asked about sponsorship as part of an online application for a full-time position or an internship that could potentially lead to full-time employment, we recommend that you answer “Yes” that you will need sponsorship. You may differ on this, arguing that you can work during your OPT period without sponsorship, but again, this is not what companies mean by the question. As you might expect, answering “Yes” may make it less likely that you'll be invited to an interview. However, you will likely not secure employment if you say “No” if the company is not willing to sponsor.
- If the question is not asked as part of an online application or by the employer in person, we recommend that you disclose your need for eventual full-time sponsorship no later than before you accept a second-round interview or before the first interview to be held on the employer's campus.
 - **Many American employers do not understand the sponsorship needs of international students, and they don't like to be surprised with this information late in the hiring process.**
- If the question is asked in regard to an internship that is clearly free-standing (i.e., not likely leading to a full-time position), you may choose to answer “No.” Regardless, we encourage you to disclose the fact that you would require sponsorship for a full-time position by at least the second interview.

Disclosure language to consider:

“I'm very excited to accept your offer for a second-round interview. I really enjoyed learning more about your company during the first-round interview and I'm very interested in the possibility for working for your company. I want to make sure before we proceed, however that you understand:

1. That while you would have to do nothing extra to hire me as an intern, if you were to want to keep me on as a full-time long-term employee, you would need to take steps to sponsor a work visa for me after X months of work.”
2. That while I am able to work for your full-time for X months without you doing anything extra, after that number of months, you would need to sponsor a work visa for me.”

If the company asks what is involved in sponsoring a work visa, you could share that it is a process of filing paperwork with the US government, that generally lawyers are required to prepare the paperwork, and that there is a fee to file the paperwork. In general the process often costs between \$2,000 and \$6,000.**

If they have questions beyond that, encourage them to talk to an immigration attorney and/or look at the US immigration website: www.uscis.gov/eir/visa-guide/h-1b-specialty-occupation/understanding-h-1b-requirements

****You may also choose to convey to an employer that you are willing to take on the financial responsibility of this process as well as hiring and communication directly with an immigration attorney.**