

WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE USA

The following is a guide to temporary employment routes in the USA for recent graduates and current students in the UK, covering:

- [Work experience programmes](#)
- [Applying for the J-1 Exchange Visitor visa](#)
- [Finding a placement](#)
- [Other useful sources of information](#)



WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMMES

There are various programmes available to gain work experience in the US, each with different eligibility criteria and application processes.

The main programmes for students and graduates require the [J-1 Exchange Visitor visa](#). They include:

- [Summer work and travel](#)
- [Intern](#)
- [Trainee](#)
- [Camp counsellor](#)

SUMMER WORK AND TRAVEL

This programme is for full-time students (including final year students) who want to work in the USA for up to four months, between May to October. It also allows a travel period of up to 30 days after the work has finished.

This programme is usually for casual jobs, such as positions in hotels, restaurants and amusement parks. Degree related work experience is possible, but only if it takes place during the summer vacation and lasts no more than 4 months. Longer internships are available through the 'Intern' programme. Au pair and camp counsellor positions are also available through their own designated programmes.

Jobs can either be arranged in advance or on arrival. Arranging a job on arrival is only possible for UK nationals and nationals from countries with USA visa waiver arrangements.

Anyone who has not arranged work in advance would need to show evidence of additional funds to support them while they look for a job.

BUNAC recommends that candidates who travel after the first week in July should have a pre-arranged job, as it can be very difficult to find one on arrival after this time.

INTERN

This programme is for full-time students and recent graduates (up to 1 year after graduation) who want to work in the USA for up to 12 months on a full-time basis. It also allows a travel period of up to 30 days before the internship starts and up to 30 days after it ends.

Internships should be related to your field of study or occupational experience and can be in a range of sectors, including: agriculture, arts and culture, construction, media, marketing, science, engineering and law. As part of the programme, the employer (host organisation) must complete an internship plan, detailing the structure of the placement and the skills and experiences the intern will gain.

This programme does not allow work in unskilled or casual labour positions, in childcare or any kind of position involving medical patient care or contact.

Unlike the J-1 visa Summer work and travel programme, the Intern programme is full-time and does not allow for any additional part-time work during the internship.

TRAINEE

This route allows graduates who have at least one year prior related work experience, to work in the USA for up to 18 months on a full-time basis. It also allows a travel period of up to 30 days before the internship starts and up to 30 days after it ends.

As with the Intern programme, the work experience must be in a degree related area, and not in a casual or unskilled position.

CAMP COUNSELLOR

This programme allows students aged 18 years or older to work in approved summer camps with American youths for up to four months. The visa cannot be extended, but allows a travel period of up to 30 days before the internship starts or up to 30 days after it ends.

This programme is specifically for work as a camp counsellor, any other support or casual positions in the camp, can be applied to through the Summer Work and Travel programme.

MORE INFORMATION:

For more information about the above programmes, as well as information about other available programmes such as 'au pair', visit: US Department of State: [J1 Visa Exchange Visitor Programmes](#).

APPLYING FOR THE J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR VISA

All of the above programmes require the J-1 Exchange Visitor visa.

HOW TO APPLY

J-1 visa exchange visitor programmes can only be applied for through a sponsor organisation, for a fee. These organisations check that both the candidate and the American employer are eligible for the programme.

Sponsor organisations may also help with finding a suitable internship, training programme or job, though are not necessarily required to do so. It's the sponsor, not the employer, who takes responsibility for the student during their time in the US.

HOW TO FIND A SPONSOR

A list of designated sponsor organisations is available on the Department of State's [J-1 visa website](#).

This includes sponsor organisations such as CIEE, AISEC, BUNAC, and also some employers who have gained sponsor status, including Disney, KPMG, Pfizer, Microsoft and Intel.

The [CIEE](#) (Council on International Educational Exchange) is one of the main sponsor organisations – the UK representatives for the CIEE are [ISTPlus](#) and [Interexchange](#).

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The whole process of applying can take at least 8 weeks, although this may vary depending on US Embassy waiting times and whether you are finding your own placement. Some sponsoring organisations can offer a 'fast track' service for an additional fee.

FINDING A PLACEMENT

Before independently searching for placements, have a look on the sponsor organisation websites as they sometimes advertise opportunities or offer help to arrange placements.

In addition to searching for advertised placements, applying to companies speculatively is common practice in the US.

INTERNSHIP LISTINGS:

- [Internweb](#)
- [Idealist.org](#)
- [Internshipprograms.com](#)
- [Going Global](#)
- [Global Placements](#)
- [AIPT](#)
- [ihipo](#) - international career networking and internships
- [IAESTE](#) - work placements for UK resident engineering, science and architecture students

WHEN DO APPLICATIONS CLOSE?

Applications for summer internships with US companies generally close between January and March, with start dates in May or June. Semester and 12-month internships usually have deadlines three to six months in advance.

OTHER USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Fulbright Commission: [Internships and Volunteer Opportunities](#) [PDF 130.72KB]
- US Department of State: [J1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program](#)
- Travel.state.gov: [Exchange visitor visas](#) – exchange visitor programme and visa FAQs.
- CIEE: [Internship Opportunities](#) – tips on where to look for an internship and links to useful websites. The CIEE website also includes advice on CVs and covering letters for the US.
- [IST Plus](#) – includes US Embassy London's video: '[Attending a non-immigrant visa interview](#)'
- [BUNAC](#)

- [International Arts and Artists](#): IA&A is a sponsor organisation for the J1 intern and trainee visas. Their Internship in the USA programme places international students and graduates with arts and culture-related organisations. See [placements](#) for a list of internships in the arts (includes media, museum work, architecture and marketing and commerce in arts-related organisations) and [links](#) for online resources, useful for speculative applications.

More information about finding jobs overseas is available on our [Working outside the UK](#) web page.