

Resources for International Students entering Clinical Psychology Programs

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***This document was prepared during Summer 2022. Please note that there may be changes to these procedures over time. This is a living document that will be continuously updated. If you note any errors or changes that should be made, please contact us directly (contact info on bottom).*

Navigating Clinical Psychology Programs:

*Considerations for international students navigating the **admissions process**:*

1. International students will need to obtain an F-1 (most common; read more [about F-1 visa](#) and [how to apply for F-1 visa](#)) or J-1 (read more [about J-1 visa](#) and [how to apply for J-1 visa](#)) student visa to attend a US College or University.
2. Diversity Visas (one way to obtain a green card/permanent residency) are made available as part of a lottery system each year. 50,000 allowed each year usually from countries who do not typically send many immigrants to the US. (read more [about the Diversity Visa lottery](#) and [specifics on the US Dept. of State website](#))
3. While graduate programs often offer application/admission fee waivers, international students are often not eligible as they usually require permanent residency.
4. Exams:
 - a. GRE: Some Clinical Psychology graduate programs no longer require the GRE, but may require it for international applicants only.
 - b. English proficiency through IELTS (International English Language Testing System), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), or other exams.
 - c. Both GRE and English proficiency exams are program-dependent. Make sure to read requirements from Clinical Psychology program pages AND graduate school of the institution.
5. Due to international tuition being higher than domestic tuition, there is often a limit on the number of fully-funded international students that a program or supervisor can accept. This can make admission for international students much more competitive.
 - a. Some programs are unable to accept international students every year, and some universities have rules that limit supervisors to one international student at a given time. This is something that should be asked about when contacting prospective supervisors to ensure that you do not waste application funds on these programs. Some, but not all, programs list this on their website.

Program Funding:

1. Earning your funding in graduate school:
 - a. Graduate Research Assistantship: International students are ineligible for many government funded programs, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

T32, F31, and diversity supplement, along with the National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program.

- i. However, if your advisor has an R-award (NIH), they can hire you.
 - ii. You can apply for other types of awards (listed below under resources).
 - b. Teaching Assistantship: International students should not experience difficulties if on a TA-line.
 - c. Fellowships and scholarships: You should be eligible for internal fellowship awards, such as Dissertation Year Fellowship and Presidential Fellowship Awards of your department, as well as other forms of internal scholarships either within the department or university.
2. Notes/Considerations
- a. Many programs do not pay students their first stipend until **one to two months** after starting. This can result in a gap in income for a longer period of time when beginning your program.
 - b. Due to the discrepancy in tuition rates between domestic and international students, a “fully funded” program for a domestic student might not be fully funded for an international student. Some programs may only waive domestic tuition and require international students to pay the tuition difference from their stipend. This is something to keep an eye out for when you receive your offer of admission and funding package.
 - c. International students in the US are not eligible for in-state tuition by definition of being international and not residents of the state, therefore expect higher tuition than peers.
 - d. International students are not eligible for student loans or FAFSA.

Navigating the Clinical Internship Process:

Applying:

1. International students are generally ineligible to complete internships at federally-funded sites, including at VA hospitals.
 - a. You may still get VA experience by completing an internship at a consortium. These internships are not funded by the federal government but still allow interns to complete rotations at VA hospitals.
2. The APPIC directory (<https://membership.appic.org/directory/search>) can be unfriendly when trying to narrow down results based on citizenship requirements. The following steps are from personal experience and can be optimized in other ways.
 1. Enter criteria or key words, it is recommended to select APA-accredited, and hit “Search”.
 2. In the results page, first sort results based on your preference, then hit “Download Results in Excel”.
 3. In the webpage, click on each result, find the section “Internship Applicant Requirements”. Check “US Citizenship Required” and “If NOT a U.S. Citizen, Authorization to Work or to Engage in Practical Training (CPT or OPT) in the US

is Required". See below section for more info on CPT and OPT. If yes to citizenship, remove result from Excel file. Can customize and add columns in Excel to indicate CPT/OPT requirements.

Immigration Status and Clinical Internships:

1. CPT (Curricular Practical Training): This status allows international students with an F1 visa to obtain work experience through employment training and **paid internship programs** related to your area of study.
 - a. With CPT, you can work:
 - i. 20 hours or more per week
 - ii. Part time for 20 hours or fewer per week
 - iii. Note
 1. One year of full time CPT can eliminate your eligibility for OPT. Thus, if you plan to use OPT for post-doc, you will need to discuss your CPT timeline with the training director at your internship program and the international student advisor at your university.
2. F1-OPT (Optional Professional Training):
 - a. Many may need post completion OPT for post-doc. It takes one to two months to obtain from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS); however it can take more than 3 months in some cases.
 - b. You will need to find employment within 90 days of the start date on your OPT Card.
 - c. Ideally, you want to have a position prior to graduation.
 - d. Post OPT is valid for twelve months.
3. There is an F1-OPT extension for those who have not already applied for another visa and that is eligible for the STEM extension.
 - a. The eligibility for OPT extension is institution-dependent; it depends on the CIP code for your field of study documented on your I-20.
 - i. <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub/additional-resources/eligible-cip-codes-for-the-stem-opt-extension>
 - b. The extension was recently increased to 24 months.
 - c. To be eligible for the extension, you have to meet the following criteria:
 - i. You should be employed in a field associated with your field of study.
 - ii. Your employer should be enrolled in the e-verify program.
4. After your F-1 OPT expires, you need a different visa for your work authorization
 - a. J-1 is an option in university settings; however, you will want to research the implication of J-1 for your current immigration status and country of origin.
 - i. *J-1 visa students are required to return to their home country after graduation and live there for 2 years before returning to the US. Confirm with your university's international student affairs counselor on how pre-graduation/pre-doctoral internship is factored into this requirement.

- b. H1 is another option; however, this is more time-consuming for departments/institutions. This may not be a viable option for all post-doc positions.

Links/Resources:

1. [gradPSYCH Blog](#): International Students & Internship: Thoughts from Training Directors.
2. [Grant funding opportunities](#) for international students.
3. [Eligible CIP Codes for the STEM OPT Extension](#).
4. Video on [International Students & the Internship Process](#)
5. [gradPSYCH Magazine](#): Welcome to America
6. APPIC presentation on [Successfully Matching, Training, and Graduating International Psychology Interns and Postdocs](#)
7. Check prospective institution's international student affairs office for more resources and materials for immigration-specific concerns, especially pre-internship.

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