

BRIEFING ROOM

FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Actions to Attract STEM Talent and Strengthen our Economy and Competitiveness

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The Biden-Harris Administration believes that one of America's greatest strengths is our ability to attract global talent to strengthen our economy and technological competitiveness, and benefit working people and communities all across the country.

In the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) – fields that are critical to the prosperity, security, and health of our Nation – our history is filled with examples of how America's ability to attract global talent has spurred path-breaking innovation. This innovation has led to the creation of new jobs, new industries, and new opportunities for Americans across the United States. Our commitment as a nation to welcoming new talent has long provided America with a global competitive advantage, and we must continue to lead in this effort.

Today, the Departments of State and Homeland Security are announcing new actions to advance predictability and clarity for pathways for international STEM scholars, students, researchers, and experts to contribute to innovation and job creation efforts across America. These actions will allow international STEM talent to continue to make meaningful contributions to America's scholarly, research and development, and innovation communities.

These announcements build on the Biden Administration's efforts to remove barriers to legal immigration, such as under [Executive Order 14012, Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration Systems and Strengthening Integration and Inclusion Efforts for New Americans](#), and to promote educational exchange, such as under the recent [Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education](#) issued by Secretaries Blinken and Cardona.

Today's agency announcements include:

- The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is announcing an [“Early Career STEM Research Initiative”](#) to facilitate non-immigrant

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BridgeUSA exchange visitors coming to the United States to engage in STEM research through research, training or educational exchange visitor programs with host organizations, including businesses. ECA is also announcing new guidance that will facilitate additional academic training for undergraduate and graduate students in STEM fields on the J-1 visa for periods of up to 36 months.

- Department of Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas is announcing that 22 new fields of study are now included in the STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) program through the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). The program permits F-1 students earning Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorates in certain STEM fields to remain in the United States for up to 36 months to complete Optional Practical Training after earning their degrees. Information on the new fields of study will be communicated to schools and students in a forthcoming Federal Register notice. The added fields of study are primarily new multidisciplinary or emerging fields, and are critical in attracting talent to support U.S. economic growth and technological competitiveness.
- DHS is issuing an update to its policy manual related to “extraordinary ability” (O-1A) nonimmigrant status regarding what evidence may satisfy the O-1A evidentiary criteria.
- O-1A nonimmigrant status is available to persons of extraordinary ability in the fields of science, business, education, or athletics. In this update, DHS is clarifying how it determines eligibility for immigrants of extraordinary abilities, such as PHD holders, in the science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) fields.
- The new update provides examples of evidence that may satisfy the O-1A evidentiary criteria and discusses considerations that are relevant to evaluating such evidence, with a focus on the highly technical nature of STEM fields and the complexity of the evidence often submitted.
- The update also emphasizes that, if a petitioner demonstrates that a particular criterion does not readily apply to their occupation, they may submit evidence that is of comparable significance to that criterion to establish sustained acclaim and recognition. Additionally, it provides examples of possible comparable evidence that may be submitted in support of petitions for beneficiaries working in STEM fields.
- With respect to immigration, DHS is issuing an update to its policy manual on how U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a DHS component, adjudicates national interest waivers for certain immigrants with exceptional abilities in their field of work.
 - The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) provides that an employer can file an immigrant petition for a person of exceptional ability or a member of the professions

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with an advanced degree. The INA provides that USCIS may waive a job offer requirement, allowing immigrants whose work is in the national interest to petition for themselves, without an employer.

- The USCIS policy update clarifies how the national interest waiver can be used for persons with advanced degrees in STEM fields and entrepreneurs, as well as the significance of letters from governmental and quasi-governmental entities. This update will promote efficient and effective benefit processing as USCIS reviews requests for national interest waivers. This effort is consistent with the Biden-Harris Administration's priorities to restore faith in the legal immigration system.

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