Academic Training: Frequently Asked Questions
For J-1 Students

What is Academic Training?
Academic Training (AT) is an academic learning experience which allows a J-1 student to apply theoretical knowledge and skills gained through coursework in a business environment. AT experiences must be directly related to a student's level and major field of study and can be used before or after a student completes their program requirements. AT is generally used for opportunities off campus, but can occasionally be used for positions at Iowa State University. A student must register for an AT-related course and be authorized by the ISSO prior to any start of the internship or academic learning experience. AT can be used during the Fall or Spring Semesters or Summer Session. Students must reapply for each semester they wish to participate in AT.

Eligibility
What is the difference between Pre- and Post-Completion AT?
Pre-Completion AT is used before a student completes their program requirements, whereas Post-Completion AT is used after a student completes their program requirements.

How do you determine when a student has completed all program requirements?
Exchange students:
- Completed semester or academic year specific to the student’s exchange program
Bachelor's degree students:
- All courses required for the degree program have been completed
Master's degree students in non-thesis programs:
- All courses required for the degree program have been completed
Master’s degree students completing a creative component or thesis:
  - Full pass has been received for final oral defense
Doctoral degree students completing a dissertation:
  - Full pass has been received for final oral defense

When is a student eligible for Pre-Completion AT?
- Student must be in valid J-1 status
- Student is enrolled in a Non-Degree, Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral program
- Student must have been enrolled for at least one semester in current program at ISU
- Student must be making normal progress toward program completion

When is a student eligible for Post-Completion AT?
- Student must be in valid J-1 status
- Student was enrolled in a Non-Degree, Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral program
- Student must have completed requirements for current program at ISU

When is a student ineligible for AT?
- Student who has not been enrolled at ISU for at least 1 semester at ISU
- Students whose program requirements were completed in the past
- Students in the Intensive English and Orientation Program (IEOP)
- Student has requested AT based solely on a minor
When can a student use AT?
AT can be used either before or after completing all program requirements. If AT is used after a student completes their program, AT must begin within 30 days of completion date.

Restrictions
Is there a limit of how much AT a student can use?
Students completing a bachelor's or master's degree: 18 months
   • Exception: Equal to the period of full course of study, if less than 18 months
Students completing a doctoral degree: 36 months
   • Exception: Equal to the period of full course of study, if less than 36 months
Exchange students: Equal to the period of full course of study for exchange students, but not to exceed 24 months

Is there a different limit for part-time and full-time AT?
No, all AT authorizations count toward the total limit.

Are there any restrictions on how many hours I can work while on AT?
   • For part-time AT, student can participate up to 20 hours per week
   • For full-time AT, student must participate more than 20 hours per week

How much AT can a student use if multiple degrees have been completed?
The duration of AT is based on total time in J-1 status, so students are not given additional time as they complete new degree programs. For example: If a student completed a bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate in the U.S. without a break between degree programs, the student would have only 36 months of AT.

Enrollment Requirements
What are the enrollment requirements for Pre-Completion AT?
Enrollment requirements for AT differs based on whether the student is pursuing full-time or part-time AT:
Full-Time AT:
   • If full-time AT will last 3 months or more during a Fall or Spring Semester, the student can enroll for the required AT-related course only. No additional registration is required
   • During summer, students on full-time AT need to be enrolled only in the AT-related course
Part-Time AT:
   • Students authorized for part-time AT during a Fall or Spring Semester must be enrolled in full-time course load* (including the AT course) no matter the duration of the AT experience
   • If full-time AT lasts less than 3 months of a Fall or Spring Semester, the student is required to be enrolled in a full-time course load (including the AT course)
   • During summer, students on part-time AT need to be enrolled only in the AT-related course

What are the full-time enrollment requirements?
   • Undergraduate: 12 credit hours
   • Graduate: 9 credit hours
   • Graduate with assistantship: Requirements are determined by the academic departments
   • Reduced Course Load (RCL), authorized by ISSO, counts as full-time enrollment
What are some sample courses acceptable for the Pre-Completion AT authorization?

- Internship course
- Cooperative education course
- Independent study or special topics course for a shorter, part-time opportunity
- Research credits if the AT experience is related to student's research

Can I drop a course on which my Pre-Completion AT is based?
No, students may not drop the AT-related course. The student will be considered in violation of their J-1 immigration status if they fail to maintain registration in the AT-related course. In this case, the student's AT will be cancelled and the student must meet with their International Student Advisor immediately.

Does a student need to enroll at ISU during Post-Completion AT?
No. The student has already finished program requirements and is not required to further enroll in classes at ISU.

**AT Duration**

Does Pre-Completion AT have to start the first day of the semester?
No, AT does not have to start on the first day of the semester. AT can start any day after the end date of the previous semester. AT can also be authorized after the semester start date, but must be authorized before starting the experience.

- Example: If Fall Semester ends on December 18, Spring AT can start as early as December 19.

When must my Pre-Completion AT end?
If student will be continuing program after the AT experience, AT may extend until the day before the start of the following semester.

- Example: If Spring Semester starts on January 11, Fall AT can extend as late as January 10.

If student is completing program during the semester they are engaging in AT, AT must end on or before the last day of the semester.

- Example: If finishing program requirements during the Fall Semester and the Fall Semester ends on December 18, AT must end on or before December 18.

When must Post-Completion AT start?
Post-Completion AT must start within 30 days of your program completion date. Also, AT must be requested from ISSO at least 10 working days before your program completion date. A student must be authorized for AT before starting the experience.

Can a student request more than one period of AT?
Yes, a student can apply for multiple AT experiences, but the total time cannot exceed the individual program limit. A student must request each AT period separately on Cystart.

**AT and On-Campus Employment**

Can a student request AT to work more than 20 hours on campus?
Only graduate students with assistantships are eligible to use AT to work up to 30 hours on campus and only if the additional employment meets the criteria for AT. ISSO will not authorize AT simply to allow another 10 hours of on-campus employment.
Can I request Pre-Completion AT and still work on campus?
Yes, students are eligible to work up to 20 hours each week on campus in addition to their AT. However, it may not be advisable to attempt over 20 hours of on-campus employment, AT activity, and full-time enrollment.

What ISU position can a student take during AT?
- If using Pre-Completion AT, AT can be used for a student position
- If using Post-Completion AT, AT cannot be used for a student position

Cystart Request
When do I submit the AT request?
If AT is to occur prior to program completion, submit request at least 10 day working days prior to beginning your AT experience. If AT is to occur after program completion, submit your request at least 10 working days prior to the completion of program.

How do I submit the AT request?
AT requests can be submitted through an electronic process in Cystart. Students may log in to Cystart using their ISU NetID and password. Complete and submit the Academic Training request found under J-1 Student Services tab.

Student must upload the AT learning experience offer letter at the time of submission. The offer letter must include the following:
- Name and address of the company or institution providing the AT learning experience
- Name and address of the company or institution where the AT learning experience will take place, if different from the address of the company
- Brief description of responsibilities and learning objectives
- Specific start (month/day/year) and end dates (month/day/year)
- Number of hours of AT activity each week

Student must enter name and contact information for academic/faculty adviser. An electronic notification will then be sent to the adviser verifying one of the following:
- AT optional for current program, attaching copy of internship/cooperative education agreement from Career Services Office, if applicable
- AT required for graduate study per his or her Program of Study, including copy of Program of Study
- AT required for completion of thesis, dissertation, or creative component, including explanation from academic/faculty adviser of how AT is necessary for completion of thesis, dissertation, or creative component
- AT required for all students in this program to earn a degree, including section from Iowa State University Catalog which documents this requirement
- AT required for completion of course requirement for a specific course, including copy of syllabus from course detailing required AT experience
What is the timeline for processing the AT request?
10 working days after there is a check mark in all boxes on the Cystart Academic Training request page.
ISSO will not start processing an AT request until the following steps have been completed:
- Student registered for the AT course, if requesting Pre-Completion AT
- Student submitted the AT request through Cystart, including job offer letter
- Verification of academic status and purpose e-forms have been approved by advisers

Can I submit just one request if I plan to do AT for more than one semester?
No, students must submit a new request for each semester of AT.

Must I register for my Pre-Completion AT course before I submit my AT request?
Yes. Students must consult with academic/faculty advisers for the information what courses are appropriate for AT prior to submitting the AT request in Cystart.

How will I know if this request has been approved and my new DS-2019 is ready?
When AT request is approved, a new DS-2019 with AT authorization will be produced. ISSO will send an e-mail to the ISU e-mail address when the AT DS-2019 is ready to be picked up. Students are asked to e-mail ISSO at isso@iastate.edu to check on AT request if they have not received the e-mail from ISSO after 10 working days, as noted above.

AT Experience
When can I begin my AT?
Students may begin AT experience only after receiving the new DS-2019 with AT authorization and Academic Training authorization letter when the start date is current.

Can I change employers during my AT?
Yes, but the new training must meet the eligibility requirements for AT. Student must complete a new AT request through Cystart and must receive a new DS-2019 with the new company or institution’s information on it before participating in an AT learning experience at that location.

Do I need to update my address if I will be living at a new address during my AT?
Yes, students are required to update their address within 10 days of moving. Students can update their address in Accessplus to fulfill this requirement.

AT Evaluation
What is the AT evaluation component?

When do I complete the AT evaluation?

Who reviews the AT evaluation?

Can my supervisor see my responses on my AT evaluation?