USTAY

OFFICIAL RULES
International Innovators Hackathon

1. PURPOSE OF THE EVENT

The International Innovators Hackathon is an educational, competitive, and non-commercial event designed to promote learning, innovation, creativity, and collaboration among international students in the United States.

Participation in the Event does **not** constitute employment, independent contracting, internship, or the provision of services, nor does it create any employment relationship of any kind.

2. ORGANIZATION AND EVENT STRUCTURE

- Participant registration and validation will be conducted exclusively through an online form accessed on the website.

- **Participants are required to use their .edu email.**

- Upon successful registration, each participant will receive:

  - A unique Hackathon ID;

  - An invitation to the official Discord server;

  - All official communications sent exclusively to their institutional **(.edu)** email address.

- Discord shall be the **sole official communication channel** for the Event.

- Project submissions must be made through the official submission form and must include the Hackathon ID.

- Participation is permitted:

- ○ Individually; or

  - ○ In groups of up to **three (3)** participants.

- ● After the submission deadline:

  - ○ All projects will be consolidated into an internal evaluation spreadsheet;

  - ○ Judges will evaluate projects **exclusively** based on the submitted materials.

- ● The use of AI-assisted development methods, including **Vibe Coding**, is permitted.

3. ELIGIBILITY

Participation is strictly limited to individuals who, at the time of registration and throughout the duration of the Event:

- ● Are currently maintaining **valid F-1 student status** in the United States (OPT students are allowed);

- ● Are actively enrolled in an **SEVP-certified educational institution**;

- ● Possess an active institutional **.edu email address**;

- ● Participate in full compliance with all applicable F-1 immigration regulations.

4. CERTIFICATION OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

As a condition of participation, each participant must certify during registration:

> "I hereby certify, under penalty of disqualification, that I am currently maintaining valid F-1 student status in the United States and that my participation in the International Innovators Hackathon fully complies with the terms and conditions of my immigration status."

Any false, misleading, or incomplete statement constitutes material misrepresentation and fraud.

5. VERIFICATION AND PRIVACY

- ● The Organizer **does not request, collect, verify, or retain immigration documents**, including Form I-20, visa, passport, or SEVIS

- The Organizer is **not** an immigration authority and relies solely on participant self-certification.

- In case of inconsistencies, the Organizer may request **academic verification only**, such as:

  - Student ID;

  - Enrollment verification letter;

  - Proof of active enrollment.

- No immigration documents will be requested or stored.

6. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Required registration fields include:

- Full legal name

- Educational institution

- Institutional email (.edu)

- Academic program

- Academic level

- Expected or completed graduation date

- LinkedIn profile

- Resume (CV)

Optional:

- Inclusion of up to two (2) additional group members, each providing all required information.

7. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Each project submission must include:

- One (1) designated group lead;

- A demo video of up to **1 minute and 30 seconds** presenting the MVP;

- A PDF document (maximum **1,000 words**) containing:

    - Problem statement;

    - Solution description;

    - Market analysis;

    - Technical explanation;

    - Next steps for implementation.

8. TRACKS

Projects may be submitted under the following tracks:

- Track 1 - Education & Workforce Development

- Track 2 - Healthcare & Life Sciences

- Track 3 - Engineering, Infrastructure & Smart Systems

- Track 4 - Data, Analytics & Decision Systems

- Track 5 - Public Policy, GovTech & Compliance

- Track 6 - Energy, Sustainability & Climate Solutions

- Track 7 - Entrepreneurship & Scalable Business Solutions

- Track 8 - Research, Innovation & Applied Science

9. NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

Participation is:

- Voluntary and educational;

- Time-limited to the duration of the Event;

- Not intended to generate commercial deliverables;

- Not conditioned on intellectual property transfer.

Any future employment, collaboration, or commercialization must occur independently and in compliance with immigration regulations (e.g., CPT or OPT).

10. PRIZES

Prizes are merit-based competitive awards:

- 1st Place: **$1,000**

- 2nd Place: **$500**

- 3rd Place: **$300**

Prizes:

- Do not constitute wages or compensation;

- Do not create any employment relationship;

- May be considered taxable income under U.S. law, with tax compliance solely the participant's responsibility.

11. FRAUD AND PENALTIES

Any attempt to misrepresent eligibility or circumvent rules will result in:

- Immediate disqualification;

- Forfeiture of prizes;

- Permanent ban from future Organizer events.

12. IMMIGRATION DISCLAIMER

The Organizer assumes no responsibility for immigration consequences arising from participation. Compliance with immigration law is the sole responsibility of each participant.

13. EVENT TIMELINE

*All times are in the Eastern Time Zone (ET).

- Registration Opens: **February 20**

- Opening Ceremony: **March 7**

- Submission Period: **March 7 – March 9 (11:59 PM)**

- Judging Period: **March 10 – March 13**

- Final Results & Closing Ceremony: **March 14**

14. ACCEPTANCE OF RULES

By registering, participants confirm they have read, understood, and accepted these Official Rules in full.