

F-1 Student Employment¹

F-1 student employment authorization is arranged through the student's school and the arrangements are made by the student. The student generally pays the USCIS filing fees and completes the necessary paperwork and there is little or no expense for the Agency/College to employ a student in F-1 status.

F-1 students may engage in three types of off-campus employment after they have been studying for one academic year. These three types of employment are:

- Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Optional Practical Training (OPT) (pre-completion or post-completion)
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training Extension (OPT) [only available if employer is enrolled in E-Verify]

Off-campus employment must be: (1) related to the student's field of study; and (2) must be authorized prior to starting work by the Designated School Official (DSO) and USCIS.

F-1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

- CPT employment must relate to the student's field of study and the experience must be part of the student's program of study.
- When enrolled at the graduate level, the student's DSO may authorize CPT during the student's first semester if the student's program requires the type of experience offered by the employer.
- The DSO will provide the student with a new Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," that shows that the DSO has approved the student for this employment. No additional employment authorization from USCIS is required.
- The student can work on CPT either full-time or part-time.
- CPT requires a signed agreement or offer letter from the employer.
- If the student has 12 months or more of full-time CPT, the student is ineligible for OPT, but part-time CPT will not stop the student from obtaining OPT employment.

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- F-1 OPT employment must relate to the student's field of study.
- The student may obtain 12 months of F-1 OPT employment at each education level, (*i.e.*, the student may have 12 months of F-1 OPT at the bachelor's level and another 12 months of F-1 OPT at the master's level).
- The student's DSO will provide the student with a new Form I-20 that shows the DSO recommendation for this employment.
- The student must apply for work authorization by filing a Form I-765, "Application for Employment Authorization," with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and pay a filing fee. USCIS will send the student a Form I-766, "Employment Authorization Document," (EAD) upon approving the Form I-765.
- The student may not begin working until they have the EAD in hand.
- While school is in session, the student may only work 20 hours per week in F-1 OPT status.

F-1 OPT STEM Extension

This type of extension is only available if the employer is enrolled in the E-Verify program. To qualify, the student's field of study must be in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) program.

¹ Regulations at 8 C.F.R. §214.2(f)(10)-(12) and 8 C.F.R. §274a. 12(b)(6)(iv).