

OFF CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

There are three off-campus employment authorization categories available to non-immigrants in F-1 status. Students may obtain more detailed information regarding off-campus employment regulations from their OIIS Advisor.

- Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Employment for Economic Necessity

Please note: Students must apply for written employment authorization prior to engaging in any employment activity. Unauthorized employment will result in a loss of immigration status

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

An F-1 student who has been in status for one academic year and who is in good academic standing is eligible, *with the recommendation of his/her IS Advisor*, to work off-campus in a position which is directly related to the student's field of study. Students are not required to receive academic credit for OPT employment experiences.

OPT may take place:

- while school is in session, provided that it does not exceed 20 hours per week,
- during the summer recess, either full or part-time,
- after completion of program, full-time only.

A student is eligible for a total of 12 months of OPT. Part-time OPT (20 hours or less per week) is deducted from available practical training at one-half the full-time rate. An application for OPT must be received by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) before a student completes his or her program of study and the OPT must be completed within 14 months of a student's program completion.

In order to obtain employment authorization under this category, the student must file an application for employment authorization with USCIS. The application process may take up to 90 days to be processed. Upon approval, the student will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). **Employment may not begin until the EAD card has been received and the effective date has been reached.**

When Should I Apply?

Students must apply for OPT before completing their studies. Since processing can take 90 days, OIIS recommends applying 3-4 months in advance of the requested start date. No specific job offer is required at the time of application. However, students should keep in mind that once an EAD is issued, the length of practical training granted is deducted from the student's 12 month bank. Students seeking OPT prior to program completion are advised that, while no job offer is required, the time requested with the OPT application cannot be altered or canceled if the student does not secure a position.

Address Changes

If you move while the OPT application is pending, you must notify both OIIS and the USCIS California Service Center of your change of address. If you move while working on OPT, you

must notify your IS Advisor within ten days of moving. This information may be submitted to the OISS online via the [Change Address Online Form](#).

Travel Outside the United States after Graduation

If you are graduating and are planning to use the OPT benefit, you must apply for OPT before you complete your studies and you must receive the EAD card before traveling outside the United States.

In order to return to the United States, you must have an EAD, Form I-20 signed for re-entry within the past 6 months, a valid F-1 visa, a valid passport and a letter from your employer, stating that you are returning to the United States to resume employment or begin a new position. While no job offer is required to apply for OPT, proof of employment is necessary if you wish to travel and re-enter the United States during the OPT period.

Should you leave the United States during OPT and require a new F-1 visa, please note that Consular Officers may reject F-1 visa applications made by students on OPT. Employment in the United States may be viewed as a step towards Permanent Residency. Students on OPT remain in F-1 status and thus must continue to prove non-immigrant intent.

How to Apply for OPT Employment Authorization

1. Obtain two photographs. Read the DHS photo specifications [handout](#). Failure to submit photographs in compliance with these specifications will delay the processing of the application.
2. Ask your Academic Advisor or Dean to complete the [Program Completion Verification](#) form.
3. Complete the USCIS form [I-765](#).
4. Please leave the following materials with your IS Advisor. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the application process please contact your IS Advisor at 965-7362.
 - - two photographs (lightly print your name in pencil on the back of each)
 - - completed I-765 form
 - - a completed Certification of Completion of Studies form
 - - a check for \$340 payable to *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)*
 - - all previously issued I-20 Forms
 - - any previous EAD cards
 - - I-94 card (white card in passport)
 - - passport
 - - current visa
5. Once the IS Advisor has approved the application, she will contact you so that you may make an appointment to sign the new I-20 Form (OPT recommendation will be on page 3). OISS will mail the entire application, including the copy of your new I-20 Form, to USCIS for processing.
6. If the application is complete, you will receive Form I-797, which has your application receipt number. **This is NOT your employment authorization.** It is merely a receipt notice confirming that the completed application has been received by the California Service Center.
7. Processing at USCIS will take an average of 90 days. Once your application is approved by USCIS, the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be mailed directly to the address written on Form I-765.

8. You may check the status of your case by entering the application receipt number at the [USCIS Service Center website](#).

In order to work in the United States, you must obtain a social security number.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

An F-1 student who has been in status for one academic year* and who is in good academic standing is eligible, *with authorization from his/her IS Advisor*, to work off-campus in a position which is an integral part of the student's curriculum. Employment authorization for CPT may only be obtained by students who will receive academic credit for the employment experience. At a minimum, qualifying CPT courses will carry academic credit, be listed in the regular bulletin of course offerings, and have a faculty member assigned to teach the course. It is particularly important that any employment experience required by the course be instrumental to achieving a curricular academic objective. CPT authorization may be granted for either full-time (summer) or part-time employment. Students are limited by their Department/Program in the amount of curricular practical training they may utilize. Students, who receive more than twelve months of full-time CPT, will lose all eligibility for Optional Practical Training.

**Graduate students required to engage in a practicum may be permitted to waive the academic year waiting period.*

How to Apply for CPT Employment Authorization

1. Obtain a written letter of offer from your employer. The letter should be an original document on company letterhead. It should include a brief position description and dates of employment as well as the supervisor's name, title, and contact information.
2. Ask your Academic Advisor or Dean to complete the [Recommendation for CPT](#) form. (link to Academic Advisor's Recommendation for Curricular Practical Training)
3. Please leave the following materials at the desk of OISS or make an appointment to speak with the OSIS Advisor if you have any questions or concerns regarding the application process.
 - a copy (front and back) of I-94 card (white card in passport)
 - completed Recommendation for CPT Form
 - ORIGINAL letter of offer
4. Processing will take approximately 4-5 days. Once the application is approved, OISS will contact you to pick up the new I-20 Form and a statement authorizing CPT will be printed on page 3. This statement will serve as proof of your employment eligibility.

Please note the following:

- You may not begin work until your IS Advisor has approved the application and has issued a new I-20 Form with the authorization on page 3.
- All related coursework must be submitted within 30 days of the CPT end date.
- Enrollment in the internship course must be maintained throughout the quarter of CPT authorization.

In order to work in the United States, you must obtain a Social Security number.

Employment for Economic Necessity

This employment authorization may be granted only to students facing severe economic hardship and unforeseen financial difficulties.

To be eligible for this employment authorization, a student must be in good academic standing and must have been in F-1 student status for one academic year. A student must also exhaust all other employment options prior to applying for Economic Necessity employment authorization. Authorization is limited to 20 hours per week when school is in session. *Please note: USCIS will not tolerate abuse of this employment category and has instituted additional eligibility requirements not listed here to restrict its use.*

In order to obtain this employment authorization, the student must then file an application for employment authorization with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). For more details on how to apply, see your IS Advisor. The application process may take up to 90 days. Upon approval, the student will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. **Employment may not begin until the EAD card has been received and the effective date has been reached.**

In order to work in the United States, you must obtain a Social Security number.