



OPT

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Employer information about international student employment

Which students qualify?

F-1 students are eligible for 12 months of Optional Practical Training at each degree level. Students with STEM degrees may have the option to apply for an additional 24-month STEM OPT extension.

They must receive authorization from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) before they can begin working, which usually takes about three to five months from the date the application is submitted.

In order to be authorized for OPT, students must meet the following criteria:

- They have been enrolled at a college or university full-time for an academic year.
- Employment must be directly related to the student's major area of study.

Pre-Completion OPT

Although uncommon, students can apply for OPT prior to the completion of their studies. However, in most cases, these students are eligible for a more desirable alternative called Curricular Practical Training (CPT). They should check with the International Student and Scholar Services Office at CSU if they are considering either of these options.

Post-Completion OPT

Students can apply for OPT to begin after the completion of their studies. Students who engaged in Pre-Completion OPT or CPT will need to re-apply for Post-Completion OPT.

- They must work at least 20 hours per week in a paid or voluntary position.
- Students do not need to have a job offer when they apply, but can only be unemployed for 90 days once their OPT is approved.

- Students can apply up to 90 days before their anticipated graduation date, but cannot begin working until their OPT is approved.

Importance of EAD

Because the standard OPT processing time is approximately three to five months, the dates on the student's Employment Authorization Document (EAD) may not match the requested dates on their I-20.

Students cannot begin working before the start date on their EAD. Ideally employers can be flexible, because students will only know a week or so before they can begin work.

F-1 students who work outside of the dates listed on their EAD, except STEM students who have applied for a STEM OPT extension, have engaged in unauthorized employment and will lose their F-1 status.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will it cost me a lot of money to hire an international student?

No, there is no additional cost or sponsorship required to employ an international student on an F-1 visa.

Can I hire an international student without a Social Security number?

Yes, students can begin working and get paid prior to receiving their Social Security number, if they don't have one already.

Is it complicated to hire an international student?

No, international students are able to fill out the I-9 with their valid legal documents (such as EAD, I-20, passport, visa, and I-94) like any other employee. Both the student and the employer should be aware of when their work authorization ends.

