



OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

University Center for International Studies
University of Pittsburgh

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Information

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is defined as temporary employment directly related to a student's field of study. During OPT, a student remains in F-1 status, their SEVIS record remains active, and the student must report changes in address and employment to OIS. When OPT is approved by US Citizenship and Immigration Services, the student receives an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) which authorizes employment for a specific time period. Below are some important points regarding OPT.

- You can apply for your work authorization on OPT to begin while you are currently studying (Pre-Completion OPT) or after you complete the degree requirements (Post-Completion OPT).
- Students may apply for full-time pre-completion OPT provided all coursework has been completed and they are working full-time on a thesis or dissertation; otherwise, students may only apply for part-time OPT (20 hours or less) during the academic year. Students applying for pre-completion OPT during normal school breaks, may seek full-time OPT (more than 20 hours per week). Students applying for post-completion OPT must apply for full-time OPT (more than 20 hours per week).
- The standard OPT period is a cumulative maximum of 12 months.
- Part-time OPT is deducted from the 12-month limit at 50%.
- An F-1 visa holder may become eligible for another 12 months of OPT if he/she advances to a **higher** educational level.
- Students in STEM fields may be eligible for an extension of OPT after their post-completion OPT.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for OPT, the student must:

- Be in valid F-1 status
- Have completed at least one academic year (two semesters) of full-time study
- Be present in the US at the time of filing of your OPT Application
- **NOTE:** If an F-1 student has engaged in 12 months or more of full-time curricular practical training (CPT), he/she is ineligible for OPT. Any amount of part-time CPT does not have any effect on eligibility for OPT.

Additional Information and How to Apply

OPT is authorized by USCIS, but first OIS must issue the OPT I-20. Detailed information about OPT, including how to apply, can be found in My OIS (my.ois.pitt.edu). We recommend that you review this information well before you plan to apply for your OPT. If you have any questions after reviewing the information in My OIS, you may schedule an appointment with your Immigration Specialist. Please keep in mind that final approval from USCIS can take several months. To check current processing times, visit USCIS' Processing Times webpage (<https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>).