

Employer Guide to Hiring F-1 Visa Students

International students on an F-1 visa have the opportunity to work off campus to gain practical experience related to their degree. Students must have work authorization before beginning their training experience. There are two primary types of authorizations—Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT). CPT is generally used by students during their degree program and OPT is for students after they graduate. Neither one has any cost for the employer.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) [Current Students]

- Used for internships, field placements, clinicals and other practical training experiences that are integral to the completion of a degree
- Experiences can be paid or unpaid
- Requires that a student register for an internship or other appropriate course. Registration must be during the same semester as the internship.
- Authorized by the International Student & Scholar Services Office, often in about one week
- Granted for one semester at a time
- Available to students who have been in status for at least 2 semesters

Optional Practical Training (OPT) [Graduating Students & Alumni]

- Used for post-graduation work opportunities, with limited exceptions
- Work experiences must be related to a student's major and commensurate with their degree
- Can be authorized for up to 36 months total, depending on a student's field of study
- Starts with an application to the International Student & Scholar Services Office but also requires approval from US Citizenship & Immigration Services (3-4 months total processing time)



CPT vs OPT

	CPT	OPT
What is it?	Authorization for off-campus training that is integral to degree completion	Authorization to continue learning in a real-world environment through a job, internship or other employment opportunity related to studies
Eligibility	Two semesters of full-time enrollment plus enrollment in an appropriate course during internship or training experience	Two semesters of full-time enrollment. Typically also requires completion of degree coursework prior to commencement of authorization
Job Offer Required to Apply?	Yes	No
Duration	Authorized one semester at a time	Typically 12 months, with a 24 month extension possible in some cases
Authorized by	International Student & Scholar Services Office (ISSSO)	US Citizenship & Immigration Services
How to Apply	Contact ISSSO with request	Attend OPT workshop
Application Fee for Student	\$0	\$410 (subject to change)
Application Fee for Employer	\$0	\$0
Processing Times	About one week	3+ months
Full-time vs Part-time	Part-time (<20 hours/week) during the academic year, full-time (20+ hours/week) typically only available in the summer	Typically full-time (20+ hours/week)