

Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Students

This information is provided by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) at <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/optional-practical-training>. You must check their website for the most updated information.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion). However, all periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.

1. Types of OPT

All OPT must be directly related to the student's major area of study. Students may participate in OPT in two different ways:

- **Pre-completion OPT:** F-1 students may apply to participate in pre-completion OPT after they have been enrolled in school for one full academic year. Students authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT must work part-time while school is in session. They may work full-time when school is not in session.
- **Post-completion OPT:** F-1 students may apply to participate in post-completion OPT after completing their studies. Students are authorized for post-completion OPT may work part-time (at least 20 hours per week) or full-time.

Please Note: Students may participate in OPT both before and after completing their studies. However, all periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.

2. STEM OPT Extension

Students who have earned degrees in certain science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields may apply for a 24-month extension of their post-completion OPT employment authorization if they:

- Are an F-1 student who received a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) degree included on the [STEM Designated Degree Program List \(PDF\)](#),
- Are employed by an employer enrolled in E-Verify, and
- Received an initial grant of post-completion OPT employment authorization based on their STEM degree.

If you are interested in applying for a STEM OPT extension, please see our [Optional Practical Training Extension for STEM Students \(STEM OPT\)](#) page for more information.

3. Applying for OPT

Generally, if you are an F-1 student who wants to apply for OPT, you must:

1. Attend the **mandatory** information session about Optional Practical Training (OPT).
2. Complete and submit [OPT Request Form](#). UTC Office of International Student Services (OISS) will make the recommendation by endorsing your Form I-20 and making the appropriate notation in the [Student and Exchange Visitor Information System \(SEVIS\)](#). Please allow us 3-5 business day for your new I-20 to be issued.
3. Properly file [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#) with USCIS, accompanied by the required fee and the supporting documentation as described in the form instructions.

4. Contact

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International Student Advisor/DSO-ARO
eunice-davis@utc.edu / (423) 425-2110

Graduate student: Lora Cook
International Student Advisor/DSO-ARO
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