

# Employment Options for F-1 Visa Students



## Optional Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is temporary authorization that gives F-1 students an opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to a practical work experience off campus prior to or after graduation. This can be paid or unpaid employment. Students are given 12 months per academic level achieved (i.e. Bachelor, Master's, PhD). The employment must be directly related to the student's field of study.

### Pre-completion:

Before completing the academic program, students are able to work off campus up to 20 hours per week while school is in session, up to 40 hours during breaks and in the summer. Time will be deducted from the post-completion OPT allotted amount of 12 months, but at a 50% rate while part-time.

### Post-completion:

After completing the academic program, students are able to work off campus full-time for the 12-month OPT period if no time was used before graduation.

### When to apply:

There is a required fee to participate in OPT. Timing is critical. OPT may be applied for 90 days prior to end date of studies and no later than 60 days after. It takes 90-120 days to process application. MUST be authorized by the USCIS based on recommendation from the designated school official. Will receive issued EAD with name, photo and dates of employment. Do not have to have a job offer but must procure one to fit in with the dates submitted in the application. Employer does not have to provide sponsorship. If employment is to continue after OPT period, the student will need to seek H1-B Visa status.

## Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

The student must be in lawful F-1 status, completed at least 9 months of full-time study, and be in good academic standing. Graduate students whose programs require immediate participation in an internship/practical training may apply at any time. Employment has to be a required part of the curriculum in an enrolled course in order to gain experience directly related to your major. CPT must earn academic credits for the proposed employment that counts towards their degree requirements. CPT can be paid or unpaid and approved for part-time (up to 20 hours per week) or full-time (21 hours or more per week).

### Must meet one of the following criteria:

- Part of a formal Cooperative Education program.
- Satisfies a required internship or Practicum which is clearly detailed in the AU bulletin.
- Employment will yield crucial data necessary to complete the student's required thesis or dissertation and is impossible to complete without the employment.
- Necessary to complete a project for which he or she will receive academic credit that directly counts towards the student's formal degree requirements.
- Necessary to complete an assigned project mandated by the professor for all student's in the course and the course is required by the curriculum and listed in the course catalog.

May obtain authorization from the designated school official in the Office of International Programs. Does NOT require USCIS issued EAD. Must have received job offer that qualifies before you submit your CPT authorization request.

For application details and additional information, contact the Office of International Students & Scholars:  
228 Foy Hall | (334)844-5001 | [auburn.edu/academic/international/iss](http://auburn.edu/academic/international/iss)



## OPT STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) Extension

Students with STEM field degrees may apply for an additional 24 months of employment beyond the 12-month OPT period.

### Criteria for the 24-month extension:

- Employer must be enrolled in the E-Verify program
- Student must be working in a STEM field related to their major.

### When to apply:

- Before the expiration of the student's current post-completion OPT, but not sooner than 90 days before the date.

### Key notes:

- A student whose period of standard post-completion OPT has already expired is ineligible to apply for the STEM OPT extension.
- A minor field of study cannot serve as the basis for a 24-month STEM OPT extension.
- An individual is eligible for two 24-month STEM OPT extensions, each after a higher level degree has been obtained.

### On-Campus Employment

F-1 international students are able to work on campus for up to 20 hours a week. Positions are very limited. For more information, please visit [handshake.auburn.edu](http://handshake.auburn.edu).

For application details and additional information, contact the Office of International Students & Scholars:

228 Foy Hall  
(334)844-5001

[auburn.edu/academic/international/iss](http://auburn.edu/academic/international/iss)

### Economic Hardship

If other employment opportunities are not available or are otherwise insufficient, an eligible F-1 student may request employment authorization based on severe economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control. This may include a loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student, substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate, inordinate increases in tuition and /or living costs, or unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses.