



OFF-CAMPUS WORK FOR F-1 STUDENTS– WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE? CPT VS OPT

	CPT: Curricular Practical Training	Standard Post-Completion OPT: Optional Practical Training
WHAT IS IT?	A work benefit for F-1 students who are still pursuing their degree (i.e., an internship or similar type of degree related training completed before graduation).	12 months of work authorization, usually completed <i>after</i> an F-1 student completes her/his degree program.
HOW AM I ELIGIBLE?	Student must be maintaining their F-1 visa status and been lawfully enrolled in a full course of study for an academic year- immigration defines this as two consecutive semesters (fall/spring)- with the same SEVIS ID.	Student must be maintaining their F-1 visa status and been lawfully enrolled in a full course of study for an academic year- immigration defines this as two consecutive semesters (fall/spring)- with the same SEVIS ID.
TRAINING MUST BE RELATED DIRECTLY TO MY MAJOR?	YES!, AND: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Career Development must approve internship for academic credit AND</i> • Student must maintain full-time enrollment when authorized for CPT 	YES!
WHAT ABOUT MY MINOR?	No, F-1 students may not pursue work authorization outside of their major.	No, F-1 students may not pursue work authorization outside of their major.
DO I NEED WORK AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE?	Yes, the DSO in GLOBAL EDUCATION will check to see you have an approved internship for credit then authorizes your employment in the SEVIS system by updating your I-20.	Yes, final approval comes from USCIS and can take 90 days OR MORE to approve.
IS THERE A DEADLINE TO APPLY?	You must obtain an I-20 from the DSO <i>before</i> you can begin working. Deadline is related to the academic calendar & course you are enrolled.	YES! I-20 with OPT recommendation issued by DSO up to 90 days before I-20 program end date and until the end of the 60-day grace period. USCIS must receive I-765 before 60 day GP.
WHO ADJUDICATES THE APPLICATION?	DSO/international student advisor in Global Education	DSO issues a recommendation on the I-20 AND then USCIS will review to process the benefit issuing an EAD work permit.
WHEN CAN I BEGIN WORKING?	<i>After</i> you meet with an IS advisor/ DSO to authorize your I-20 for CPT employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>After</i> your OPT application is approved by USCIS, <i>and</i> • You have your EAD card in hand, <i>and</i> • The OPT Start Date is current.

CPT & OPT – WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?



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HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BE APPROVED?	A DSO/international student advisor can approve your CPT and update your I-20 within a few days or during a 30 minute appointment	USCIS can take up to 90 days (sometimes more) to process, approve, and mail the EAD card.
DO I NEED A JOB OFFER TO APPLY?	Yes, complete the Off-campus Employment/CPT Request Form & upload an internship offer letter.	NO , although employment during OPT is required, F-1 students are allowed 90 days unemployment during the approved OPT period.
HOW LONG DOES THE EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION LAST?	Must align with the academic semester dates. The dates listed on the I- 20 are specific to the offer: Employment may not begin before the approved CPT start date, and may not continue beyond the CPT end date listed on the I-20.	Up to 12 months of work authorization, provided the F-1 student finds employment within the 90-day unemployment period. If a student is unable to find work within 90 days, the student must exit the U.S.
WHAT SERVES AS MY PROOF OF WORK AUTHORIZATION?	Updated I-20 with work authorization on page 2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated I-20 with work authorization on page 2, <i>AND</i> • EAD (OPT) card.
WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?	Meet with a Global Ed. Advisor and attend an off-campus employment info session.	Meet with a Global Ed. Advisor and attend an off-campus employment info session.

**Note: This document is meant to serve as a resource and should not be construed as legal advice.*

Always contact an International Student advisor in Global Education with questions.