Optional Practical Training (OPT) Guide

OPT is temporary employment authorization, which allows F-1 students to engage in off-campus employment related to their major field of study. The work performed does not have to be counted toward course credit, unlike Curricular Practical Training. OPT may be used during a degree program (pre-completion OPT) and/or after completion of the program (post-completion OPT).

**HOW TO REQUEST OPT**
- Submit the “OPT Application Request” via the [International Student Portal](#).
- Create a UScis account.
- Make an appointment with an IS advisor to complete the I-765 on the USCIS website.

**PRE-COMPLETION OPT**

**Eligibility**
- The student must have been in full-time status for one academic year at UTSA preceding the OPT application and must be in valid F-1 status at the time of application.
- Employment must be directly related to the student’s area of study.
- No job offer is required.
- The student authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT is limited to 20 hours per week of OPT while school is in session. S/he may work full-time when school is not in session.

**Duration of Employment**
- A maximum aggregate period is 12 months per educational level.
- Part-time OPT is deducted from the 12-month limit at 50%. **Note:** Part-time employment is 20 hours per week and less; full-time employment is 21 hours per week and more.
- Pre-completion OPT is NOT subject to the unemployment provisions.

**Dates of OPT Authorization**
- Discuss with the International Student Advisor your preferred dates at the time of application.

**When to apply**
- The student who has already met the one academic year requirement may apply up to 90 days in advance of the requested employment start date.

**POST-COMPLETION OPT**

**Eligibility**
- The student must have been in full-time status for one academic year at UTSA preceding the OPT application and must be in valid F-1 status at the time of application.
- Employment must be directly related to the student’s area of study.
- No job offer is required.

**Duration of Employment**
- A maximum aggregate period is 12 months per educational level.
- The student may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment.

**Dates of OPT Authorization**
- Discuss with the international student advisor your preferred dates at the time of application.
- The requested employment start date may not be more than 61 days after the student’s program end date, and all post-completion OPT must be completed within the 14-month after the student’s program end date.

**When to apply**
- The student who has met the eligibility requirements may apply up to 90 days prior to the graduation date and within 60 days after the graduation date.
- The student must also file the OPT application with USCIS Service Center within 30 days after the International Student Advisor enters the recommendation for OPT into the student’s SEVIS record.