

CAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S. WORK ON AN F1 (STUDENT VISA)?

What to Know About OPT vs. CPT.

Students who plan to study abroad in the U.S. have many questions throughout the process, including around the topic of student visas. [Click here for general visa Q&A to share with students](#). In addition to understanding the application procedure, they may also be wondering if they are allowed to work on a student (F1) visa while attending university, or even after they graduate. Luckily, the answer is yes, students typically can; however, it's important to be aware of the regulations.

On-campus employment is the simplest option as far as visa regulations, and is in fact the only work option available for F1 visa holders during their first year of study. Under the F1 visa, students can work up to 20 hours on their university campus.

However, off-campus employment is a bit more complicated. There are two main types, each with its own rules: Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Here is a breakdown of each, to help clarify these terms when explaining them to students.



OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) is temporary employment, either on or off campus that is directly related to the student's major.

- Students can apply for OPT after being enrolled as a full-time student at university for one full academic year.
- The employment must be authorized prior to starting any work.
- Students must work part time while school is in session (they can work full time when school is not in session).
- Employment can be during and/or after their degree program (additional stipulations apply for jobs after graduation).
- Refer to this page of the [USCIS website](#) for full details.

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT) is off-campus employment that is not only related to the student's major, but also an integral part of the university curriculum (such as required internship or practicum). It can also be work for which academic credit is awarded.

- Students can apply for CPT after being enrolled as a full-time student at university for one full academic year.
- Students must have received a job offer that qualifies for CPT before they submit their authorization request.
- Their job offer must be in their major or field of study.
- Employment must be authorized prior to starting any work.
- Refer to the [USCIS website](#) for full details on CPT.

If you still have questions about international students working while on an F1 visa in the U.S., or any other aspects of student admissions in the States, contact us at BridgePathways for more information.



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600 South Cherry Street, Suite 520
Denver, CO, 80246
Toll Free: 1-844-396-5336 | Worldwide: 1-303-785-8891