

### Pre-completion OPT Information for F-1 Students

There are [strict limits](#) for how international students can work while on an F-1 visa. Pre-completion OPT (Optional Practical Training) allows international students to gain work experience before graduation without earning academic credit.

#### Important Notes about Pre-completion OPT:

- You must have been lawfully enrolled full time at an SEVP-certified school for at least 12 months before you are eligible for OPT.
- Standard OPT is available for a maximum of 12 months for each educational level. If you participate in pre-completion OPT, the number of months you are eligible for post-completion OPT will decrease.
- If you participated in full-time CPT (Curricular Practical Training) for a year or more, you are not eligible for OPT.
- F-1 students on post-completion OPT are only allowed 90 total days of unemployment. If you exceed 90 days of unemployment, you will be in violation of status. Even though there are no restrictions of unemployment during pre-completion OPT, it is usually advantageous to have prospective employment opportunities since any time authorized for pre-completion OPT is subtracted from the time available for post-completion OPT, whether the student obtains employment or not.
- If you are on pre-completion OPT but are not employed for 90 days, you must maintain F-1 status as a full-time student or receive pre-authorized Reduce Course Load (RCL).
- A one-time extension of OPT is available for students in approved STEM fields.
- The work you do for OPT must be directly related to your major.
- There are three types of pre-completion OPT:
  - Type A: During the student's annual vacation You must intend to register for the next term. OPT may be part- or full-time
  - Type B: While school is in session  
You must be registered full-time. OPT must be part-time only
  - Type C: After completion of all course requirements but still work on thesis/dissertation  
If you are working on a master's thesis/project or doctoral dissertation following completion of all coursework you may be authorized for part-time or full-time OPT.
- **You must complete the [OPT Request Form](#) before you start the OPT application.**

#### USCIS Application Checklist

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Academic Services recommends that your application be assembled in the order indicated below.

Paperclip payment and passport photos on top.

- Form G-1145** (<https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>)  
Typed, not handwritten.
- Original, signed Form I-765** (<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>)  
Typed, not handwritten.  
Signature: use black or blue ink to sign name in the signature box. Ensure the signature stays within the box.  
The Eligibility Category code for Pre-completion Optional Practical Training is (c)(3)(A).
- Photocopy of Passport Page**  
Page that includes photo, passport number and expiration date.  
Must be valid for at least 6 months from application date.
- Photocopy of F-1 Visa Page**  
Page that includes photo, passport number, expiration date, and SEVIS ID.

- Printout of I-94 Arrival/Departure form** (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>)
- Photocopy of Complete OPT I-20**  
Sign and date the “Student Attestation” section.
- Two (2) U.S. Style Passport Photos**  
Write your name and I-94 number on the back of each photo IN PENCIL.  
Passport photos must be 2"x2" with proper facial dimensions of U.S. Style passport photos.  
Do not use photos from your home country.
- \$410 Application Fee Payment**  
Choose one of two options:
  - Form G-1450 for U.S. credit card paymentOR
  - A Check from a U.S. bank payable to: **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**
    - Write: Four hundred ten dollars
    - Write date of birth and I-94 number on front of the check in the memo section (bottom left corner)
    - If check is a cashier’s check, money order, or from another account holder, write your name as well
    - Do not write or sign on the back of the check
    - Check must have an imprinted name on upper left corner and imprinted or handwritten address
- If applicable, include:**  
Photocopies of all previously issued I-20s, EAD cards, CPT I-20s and OPT I-20s.

### Mailing Instructions

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- Make photocopies of the entire application for your records.
- Mail application packet by certified US mail to the appropriate USCIS Lockbox Facility—see address below. Application **must be received by USCIS within 30 days of the I-20 issuance date**—refer to the “School Attestation” section on page 1.
- If you currently live in **Pennsylvania**, mail your application to the appropriate address below. If you live in another state, see [USCIS Phoenix and Dallas Lockbox facilities](https://www.uscis.gov/forms/forms-information/uscis-phoenix-and-dallas-lockbox-facilities) (<https://www.uscis.gov/forms/forms-information/uscis-phoenix-and-dallas-lockbox-facilities>) for the correct mailing address.

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Deliveries:

USCIS  
P.O. Box 660867  
Dallas, TX 75266

For FedEx, UPS, and DHL Deliveries:

USCIS  
Attn: NFB AOS  
2501 S. State Hwy. 121 Business, Suite 400  
Lewisville, TX 75067

### Maintaining Status While on Pre-completion OPT

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- You may begin working on or after the date on your EAD card.
- While on OPT, you must continue to notify Cedar Crest within 10 days if your address, phone number, or email address change, if your employer or position changes, or if your employer’s address changes.
- While on OPT, you should keep a detailed record for each job that you hold. This record should include:
  - The position title and a description of the work
  - The length of the position (with exact start and end dates)
  - The name and address of your employer
  - The name and contact information of your supervisor