OPT ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a work authorization for which students in F-1 immigration status may apply. Applications must be approved by a Designated School Official (DSO) and sent to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for approval. Before applying, you should verify that you are eligible for OPT.

There are two kinds of OPT: pre-completion OPT and post-completion OPT. “Completion” refers to completing your educational program, or graduation. Most information about OPT is the same whether you are considering pre-completion OPT or post-completion OPT, but there are some variations.

General OPT Requirements

To be eligible for OPT, you must:
• Have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time, face-to-face basis in a DHS-approved college, university, conservatory, or seminary for one full academic year (two terms)
• Be currently maintaining F-1 status
• Plan to work in a field directly related to your major area of study
• Not have previously completed 12 months or more of OPT at your current degree level

Pre-completion OPT Requirements

In addition, for pre-completion OPT, you must:
• Continue to maintain your F-1 status by enrolling full-time unless you are on your approved break term
• Plan to work part-time (up to 20 hours per week) while school is in session or full-time (more than 20 hours per week) when school is not in session or during your approved break term

Post-completion OPT Requirements

For post-completion OPT, there are different eligibility requirements than for pre-completion OPT. You must:
• Apply no more than 90 days before the end of your program (your graduation date) and before the end of your grace period (60 days after your graduation date)
• Plan to work full-time (more than 20 hours per week)

If you have additional questions about your eligibility for OPT, please consult the Office of International Students and Programs.