



Hiring an International Student

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a program that allows international students in the United States to gain practical experience in their field of study after completing their degree. OPT provides an opportunity for students to work for up to 12 months in a job directly related to their major.

There are two main types of OPT: Post-completion OPT which is employment authorization after the completion of the degree program; and STEM Extension OPT which allows students with certain STEM degrees to extend their employment authorization for an additional 24 months after they complete Post-completion OPT. This information focuses on Post-Completion OPT.



Employer Role

Applying for OPT is solely the student's responsibility, and therefore requires no action from the hiring organization. OPT can be granted to the student with or without an offer of employment.



Student Role

Obtaining OPT employment authorization is a two-step process. First, ISSA must determine if a student is eligible for OPT. If eligible, the student will be issued a document recommending them for OPT to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The student then applies for work authorization through USCIS. If approved, USCIS issues an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card as proof of work authorization.

Students cannot begin working until they have received the EAD card and the start date on the card has arrived. In cases of lost or missing cards, students must contact USCIS.

Cost & Processing Time

The student pays USCIS an application fee for the EAD card. USCIS processing time for the EAD card is approximately 3 months.

Limits on Hours per Week

Students on Post-completion OPT and STEM OPT must work a minimum of 20 hours/week and may work for multiple employers simultaneously as long as each position is related to their field of study.

For more information on employing international students, contact International Student Advising.



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