

F-1 Off-Campus Employment

	Economic Hardship	Intern with International Organization	Curricular Practical Training (CPT)	Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Description	Available to students who demonstrate severe economic hardship as a result of events which could not be expected	Internship or temporary employment with an international organization (e.g. World Bank, IMF, OAS)	Training which is: Required for the degree; Required for credit course which will count toward degree.	Training related to the major listed on the most recent I-20.
Who is eligible?	Student who has been in-status for one full academic year	Student who is in-status and is in an academic program	Student in an academic program and lawfully enrolled as a full-time student for one full academic year	Student in an academic program and lawfully enrolled as a full-time student for one full academic year
Number of hours per week	20 hrs when school is in session; 21 or more in the summer or when school is not in session	20 hrs when school is in session; 21 or more in the summer or when school is not in session	Hours are determined by the requirements of the training or the co-op agreement	21 hrs or more in summer; 20 hrs when school is in session; 21 hrs or more after completion of program
Which office provides work permit	USCIS with DSO recommendation	USCIS with DSO recommendation	Designated School Official (DSO)	USCIS with DSO recommendation
Documents necessary for recommendation (see separate handouts for more details)	Letter explaining need with supporting documents	Written job offer I-20	Letter from Academic Advisor stating that training is required or for credit or Letter from Co-op office	OPT request form, I-765
Time required to get permit	Six to eight weeks	Six to eight weeks	Five to ten days	Six to eight weeks
Remarks			Students who use 12 months or more of full-time CPT will not be eligible for OPT.	An F-1 student is eligible for 12 months of OPT at each academic level. (if the request is connected to a higher level degree program)

WARNING: Working without written work authorization from USCIS or the Office of International Student Services is a violation of your F-1 status and the consequences are severe!

Office of International Student Services

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is “employment”? If you provide a service and you receive some type of compensation in exchange for your service you are employed. Employers use many different names for jobs (i.e. internship, babysitting, assistantship, work-study, etc), but regardless of the name, if it meets the description above you should consider it to be employment. Some people say that work such as babysitting is not employment, but USCIS has never given a clarification and you need to be careful. If you have questions, contact an international student advisor before you begin.

What is the difference between part-time and full-time work? USCIS considers part-time to be any employment that is less than 20 hours per week. If the job requires 21 hours per week or more it is considered to be full-time. This may be different from an employer’s definition that considers anything less than 40 hours per week part-time. Your work permit is determined by the USCIS definition.

What does “related to the major” mean? USCIS has never provided a specific definition for this phrase. However, as an F-1 student you are admitted at this time to study towards a degree in a specific academic major or field. Practical training is intended to allow the opportunity for “hands-on experience” in the same field. Therefore, you should be able to explain how the training/work that you are doing is connected to or adds to what you study in the classroom.

Does time in another immigration status count towards the one academic year requirement? USCIS *Operations Instructions* clarify that to be eligible for practical training; an F-1 student must have been lawfully enrolled as a full-time student at a DHS approved school in a status which permits full-time study. Examples would be student’s enrolled full-time while in J-1 student status or as dependents in A, E, G, H, J, L, O or TN status prior to changing to F-1 status. Students enrolled in B1/B2 or F-2 status are considered to be in violation of status and may not take advantage of this provision.

Are F-1 students automatically eligible to work off campus after one academic year or in the summer? **ABSOLUTELY NOT!** Students are eligible to apply (to the school or USCIS; whichever is appropriate) for work authorization after being in F-1 status for *one academic year*.

Do I need a new Social Security Card when I begin to work? Generally F-1 students have a Social Security card with the statement “Not Valid for Employment Without INS Authorization”. This card is sufficient for employment while in F-1 status and you do not need a new card.

Do F-1 students have to pay taxes? Yes. F-1 students with income in the United States are required to pay both federal and state income tax and file a tax report. For the first 5 years in the United States, F-1 students are considered to be non-residents for tax purposes and generally are not required to pay Social Security taxes.

Nonresident tax laws are extremely complex and many employers are not experienced in deducting taxes for nonresidents. Likewise, you cannot count on friends to provide you with accurate information. If you have questions, you need to read IRS publications, speak with an IRS representative or speak with a tax preparation expert. To get more complete information about nonresident taxes you may refer to the Internal Revenue Service Publication 519. This publication can be downloaded from the website www.irs.ustreas.gov