International Student Services Workshop
Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
Pre/Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Eligibility Requirements
1. Present in the U.S. in valid F-1 status at the time of application; and
2. Registered full-time for at least one academic year (3 quarters) in a valid status that permits study at the time CPT* or OPT will begin (can apply before finish 3 quarters).
   *note can start earlier only for degree requirement CPT

Other Off-Campus Work Authorizations for F-1 Students
• On-campus: 20 hours/week while class in session, no limit on breaks
• International Organization
• Severe Economic Hardship

These other categories of work do not affect eligibility for CPT or OPT.

Unpaid internships
Work authorization is not required if the internship is a bona fide (true) unpaid internship. A job qualifies as unpaid if it meets the following criteria:
1) the position was advertised as unpaid; and
2) another worker with work authorization would not be paid do this internship
In this case, you can do as many unpaid internships as you like and you do not have to get work authorization. Always ask ISS if you have any questions.

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

What is Curricular Practical Training (CPT)?
• CPT is temporary employment authorization for F-1 students to gain practical experience in jobs directly related to their major area of study while current students
• CPT is granted by school and based on degree requirement or course requirement
• CPT authorized by school for specific employer, specific dates corresponding with quarter of course enrollment for internship class or degree requirement
• part-time CPT (less than 20 hours per week) does not affect OPT
• full-time CPT (more than 20 hours per week) cannot be more than 12 months cumulative between F-1 programs or will be ineligible for OPT

What kinds of courses qualify for CPT?
• Required practicum (such as Social Welfare http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/social-work/basw-practicum-faqs or Masters of Accounting TACCT 601 Internship)
• Business: TBUS 468 http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/milgard-school-business/resources/internships
• Institute: TCSS 497 http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/institute-technology/internships
• PPE: TPOLS 496 http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/interdisciplinary-arts-sciences/internship-opportunities
• Other IAS: TESC or TIAS 496 http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/interdisciplinary-arts-sciences/independent-studies-internships-undergraduate-level
How to apply for CPT:
1) find internship, sign up for internship course
2) have employer complete offer letter following template
3) complete CPT request form, have academic adviser complete Step 2 of form
4) make appointment with International Student Adviser to turn in offer letter, CPT request form and get new I-20 with CPT authorization

Note on CPT dates:
CPT can only be approved WITHIN the quarter that you are taking a class. This can include the break (spring break, or winter break). For example, a spring quarter internship can start on the first day of spring break and end on the last day before summer session. Unless you sign up for a class in the next quarter, the internship cannot go into the following quarter.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?
• OPT is temporary employment authorization for F-1 students to gain practical experience in jobs directly related to their major area of study.
• Total of 12 months of OPT available per education level (i.e. Bachelor's, Master’s, Doctorate)
• Additional 17 month STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) extension OPT for Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Environmental Science

OPT Overview
• Before program end date (Pre-completion OPT):
  o Part-time while classes are in session (20 hours or less per week, cannot be averaged)
  o Full-time or part-time during breaks or vacation quarters

• After program end date (Post-completion OPT):
  o Granted on a FULL-TIME basis only

• Any previous periods of OPT used before completion of studies must be deducted from the 12-month total eligibility. Part-time OPT is tolled at a half-rate. Example: 4 months part-time OPT is subtracted from the total as 2 months.

Other items to note:
• No offer of employment is required in order to apply for OPT, but after the EAD is issued, the student is expected to be working or actively seeking employment.
• May not pursue a new course of study while on OPT.
• Must apply by mail to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to receive approval before the OPT employment begins.
• The approval process for USCIS takes between three and four months.
OPT is *not* employer specific, nor is it tied to one place of employment. You may work part-time or full-time, have multiple jobs and change employers while on OPT, as long as the type of work that you perform is:

1. Directly related to your major area of study, and  
2. Commensurate with your level of education

**Example: EAD card**

![Employment Authorization Document (EAD)](image)

USCIS will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) when the application has been approved. The card will state the specific time frame of the authorization. A student cannot legally begin working until they are in physical possession of the EAD and the start date has been reached.

**Employment requirement during post-completion OPT**

Students on post-completion OPT may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment within a 12 month period of OPT. Those with STEM OPT extension (up to 17 months) may accrue a total of 120 days of unemployment (during the 29 months).

**What counts as employment?**

*Must work an average of 20 hours per week while using post-completion OPT* (*not less than 80 hours/month*)

Keep documentation of type of job, days and hours worked. **Report employer name, address and start or end dates to International Student Services (ISS) uwtiss@uw.edu.**

**Paid Employment:**
• **Multiple employers**: students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to each individual student's degree program.

• **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists)**: students, such as musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short-term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration.

• **Work for hire**: this is also commonly referred to as 1099 or independent contractor employment, where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. Students should maintain evidence of the duration of contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

• **Self-employed business owner**: students on OPT may start a business or be self-employed. The student should be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to his or her degree program.

• **Employment through an agency or consulting firm**

**Unpaid Employment:**

• Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this practice does not violate any labor laws.

**Application Procedures:**
The application process involves 2 steps:
1. Recommendation from UW Tacoma International Student Adviser
2. Authorization from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

UW Seattle ISS resource:
http://iss.washington.edu/employment/f1-employment/opt/application

**When should I begin applying?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation:</th>
<th>No earlier than 30 days before you plan to mail your application to USCIS.</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| USCIS will accept applications: | **- POST-completion**: earliest is 90 days prior to your program end date (for spring 2013 graduates, this is March 18, 2012)  
Latest: up to 60 days after program end date – August 13, 2013  
**- PRE-completion**: 120 days prior to OPT start date if you are in your 2nd year. Otherwise, 90 days prior to OPT start date if you are in your 1st year. |
STEP 1: ISS Recommendation
Make an appointment with the ISS adviser by emailing uwtiss@uw.edu. Prepare the following documents for your appointment:


Application Step 1A:  
ISS OPT Request Form: Employment/OPT start and end dates must be indicated on this form!  
Things to consider when determining OPT start date:

Pre-completion:
• Job start date
• Class schedule

Post-completion:
• OPT can start any time during the 60-day grace period after the program end date. **Example: end date June 14, 2013, OPT can start any time between June 15, 2013 and August 13, 2013.**
• Job start date
• H-1B situation (see following information)
• Whether or not you want to conserve OPT (perhaps for a 2nd Master’s degree?)
• The "start date" is the date your work permission begins. You cannot work earlier than the start date, but you can start working later.
• Changing the requested OPT dates after the application has been mailed to USCIS can be very difficult. Choose your dates carefully.

Application Step 1B: Form I-765, “Application for Employment Authorization”
• This is the official application form sent to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for work authorization.
• We recommend that you fill it out online and then print it (writeable pdf format).
• DO NOT file electronically!

Instructions for the Form I-765:
• Mark the first box, “I am applying for: permission to accept employment”
• Item #1 – Print your entire name as it appears in your passport and on Form I-20. Last name only in capital letters. Do not use initials!
• Item #3 – Enter your current U.S. address. If you live in an apartment, please put “APT” in front of your apartment number. You must select an address that will be valid for the next 4-5 months. If your address may change, use the address of a friend or relative.

**NOTE:** ISS does not recommend the use of our address for completion of this form. If you do use our address, it is:
UWT ISS Box 358401  
1900 Commerce St.  
Tacoma, WA 98402-3112
• We recommend you include the last four digits of the zip code (Ex. 60637-2916) Check postal service website: http://zip4.usps.com/zip4/welcome.jsp
When using a friend or relative’s address, you should write “c/o followed by the individual's first and last name” in the address field. The c/o stands for, ‘in care of.’

If the address you use is outside of Washington, you may be required to mail your application to another USCIS Service Center (NOT RECOMMENDED – check with your ISS adviser).

The U.S. Postal Service does NOT forward government mail to a new address.

• Item #10 – Enter 11-digit number on I-94 card (small white card stapled in passport)
• Item #11 – If you have submitted an application for work authorization in the past, check “yes.” CPT or H-1B does not count as having previously applied for work authorization (they are asking about previous EAD employment authorization cards).
• Item #12 – Enter the date of your last entry to the U.S. (should be stamped on your I-94 card).
• Item #13 – Enter the port of entry you last came through (on the entry stamp on your I-94 card).
• Item #15 – Enter “F-1 student.” If you have changed status since your last entry, include a copy of your Form I-797 Approval Notice as proof that you are now in F-1 status.
• Item #16 –
  o Pre-completion OPT – Enter code: (c)(3)(A) and write “F-1 Pre-completion Optional Practical Training” next to or above it. (You will have to hand write this in.)
  o Post-completion OPT – Enter code: (c)(3)(B) write “F-1 Post-completion Optional Practical Training” next to or above it. (You will have to hand write this in.)

***SIGN and date Form I-765! *** (If you don’t, then your application will be returned, causing delays of at least a month.)

Once ISS has reviewed your OPT request documents, a new I-20 will be prepared, showing the dates of your OPT employment on page 3. You will also receive back the original proofread Form I-765 as well as screen shots from SEVIS showing any previous OPT or CPT use at UW Tacoma.

**STEP 2: USCIS Application Procedures**

Mail the following documents to USCIS:

1. Form I-765, "Application for Employment Authorization," with fee and photographs stapled to it (see items #2 and #3 below).
2. Two passport style photos in color. You can get these done at any passport photo location, including Walgreens or the UPS Store. On the back of each photo, print your name lightly with a pencil. Put the photos into a small plastic bag or envelope and staple it to the top of Form I-765. Make sure the photos are recent and have not been used in any previous application, such as for your visa, or your application will be delayed as USCIS will ask for new photos.
3. A check for the filing fee of $380 payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." It is better to use a personal check than a money order. Staple your completed and signed check to the front of the I-765. Make sure the check has your current address.
4. A photocopy of your Form I-20 (the one with the OPT recommendation on it), all pages. **DO NOT SEND ORIGINAL I-20! The ISS signature must be less than 30 days old at the time the application is received by USCIS.**
5. A photocopy of your I-94 Departure Record card, front and back.
6. Screen shots from SEVIS of OPT and CPT use (you can get this from ISS with your new I-20).
7. Photocopies, front and back, of all previous EAD(s) issued to you for OPT.
8. Photocopies, front and back, of all I-20s from any previous U.S. institution before UW Tacoma.
9. Photocopies of the identity pages of your passport. This includes the page that has your photograph and biographic information.
10. Form G-1145, "E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance," if you want to be notified by email and/or text message when your application is received. See http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf for form and filing instructions.

Post-completion OPT applications must be received by USCIS **within 60 days** of the program end date listed on the Form I-20. Any application received by USCIS after the 60 day grace period **will be rejected** and cause you to lose your OPT eligibility!

Mailing Instructions: We recommend using a form of secure mail that provides delivery confirmation, such as U.S. Postal Service Certified Mail with a Return Receipt.

Applications from Washington go to a USCIS Lockbox facility in Phoenix, Arizona. The address to use:

**USCIS**  
**PO Box 21281**  
**Phoenix, AZ 85036**  

*Make a photocopy of your entire application before mailing and keep it with your mailing receipt.*

**Checking on your application**

How can I check the status of my application?  
- If you filed Form G-1145 (see above), you should receive an initial email or text from the USCIS Lockbox in Arizona confirming that your application was received, and providing you with a receipt number.  
- If you paid the $380 fee with a personal check, you will be able to check your online banking account to see the image of the cashed check once USCIS cashes it.  
- Within a month of mailing your application you will receive a Receipt Notice from USCIS. The Receipt Notice contains an receipt number that you can use to check the status of your application on-line at the USCIS Case Status Search Page: [https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do)

**Special Issues**

1) What if I need to cancel my application?  
   - You **must** contact ISS immediately, as this can be problematic.

2) What if I don’t graduate as planned?  
   - Notify ISS as soon as you are aware of a potential problem. Students who apply for post-completion OPT and do not graduate as indicated on the application are subject to different OPT rules.

3) What if unforeseen circumstances occur with my mailing address?  
   - Contact ISS immediately. **DO NOT UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS ONLINE!**

4) What if I don’t receive my EAD card by the time I need to begin working?  
   - You cannot begin working until you receive the EAD card. Contact your employer as soon as possible to inform them of your delayed employment start date.
Post-Completion OPT Travel

Once OPT is APPROVED
If you have completed your studies AND received your EAD card: You may depart and re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status, provided you have the following documents at the time of re-entry:
• Valid Passport
• Valid F-1 Visa
• New I-20 with OPT Recommendation and travel signature less than 6 months old
• Valid EAD Card
• Job Offer Letter or Letter of Employment Verification from your current employer

NOTE: Without your EAD card AND proof of employment/job offer you assume risk in trying to re-enter the U.S. while on OPT.

While OPT is PENDING
Before Program End Date:
• You are able to travel normally as an F-1 student. NOTE: Contact employer if applying for H-1B.

After Program End Date:
• It is not advisable to travel outside the U.S. prior to receiving your EAD card and securing employment.
• EAD cards will NOT be sent overseas, and an EAD card is required for re-entry.
• Students who have an EAD card but don’t have a job may be denied entry into the U.S.

What happens if my F-1 visa is no longer valid?
• If your F-1 visa will expire before you re-enter, you must apply for a new visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy abroad PRIOR to your return.
• After your program end date, you will need proof of employment to show you are returning to the U.S. to resume employment appropriate for OPT.

NOTE: If you are denied the renewal of your F-1 visa, then you will not be able to return to the U.S. in F-1 status.

F-2 Dependents - Travel Outside the U.S.
In addition to their own Form I-20 – with updated travel signature, passport and valid F-2 visa, F-2 dependents should keep copies of the following F-1 documents for travel:
• F-1 Form I-20
• F-1 Visa
• F-1 Passport identification page(s)
• F-1 I-94 Departure record, if available
• And the EAD with proof of employment/job offer
OPT Reporting Requirements:
All F-1 students on post-completion OPT are required to report any change in the following information within 10 days to ISS at uwtiss@uw.edu:
- Name changes
- Address changes
- The name and address of their employer
- Any change of name or address of their employer
- Any interruption of employment
- All employers must report to ISS within 48 hours: departure or termination of student on OPT

When to Notify ISS
- When you receive your EAD card, send a copy.
- If you choose to study after completion of OPT, you can have your SEVIS record transferred. This can be done anytime during the 60 day grace period following the OPT end date.
- If you change your status, provide evidence (i.e. approval notice, I-94 card) of the new status to ISS so that we can complete your SEVIS record appropriately.

STEM Extension
- 17 month extension available to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Majors
  - Examples on UW Tacoma campus: Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Environmental Science
- Apply 90 days before your current OPT expires, can continue to work while extension is pending
- Must be employed within your field for an E-Verify employer (UW is an E-Verify employer)
- See http://iss.washington.edu/employment/f1-employment/opt/stem-extension for more information

H-1B Cap Gap
- H-1B Cap (for ‘new’ H-1Bs):
  - 65,000 ‘general quota’ – Bachelor’s degree required
  - 20,000 ‘Masters quota’ for U.S. MA/MS degree
  - Submit petition on April 1st for an October 1st start date
- DOES NOT apply to universities or non-profit research organizations. These entities can submit H-1B petitions anytime of the year for any start date without limit.
- Other work visa options:
  - Australia: E-3 (10,500)
  - Canada & Mexico: TN (no limit – must renew every three years)
  - Chile & Singapore: H-1B1 (6,800)

H-1B “Cap Gap” Solution The new cap gap rule extends the authorized period of stay as well as OPT employment authorization for all F-1 students who have an H-1B Change of Status petition pending or approved by USCIS. The extension of status and work authorization terminates on October 1st, when the H-1B status begins, or for pending applicants when the H-1B petition has been denied. Students must contact ISS to receive a new cap gap I-20 that confirms employment authorization during this period.
In order to use the cap gap, you must have OPT through at least April 1st of the year your employer files your H-1B.

If your H-1B petition has been denied, your automatic OPT work extension will immediately terminate. In this case, you will have 60 days (from notification of denial) to depart the U.S. The automatic extension of status also applies to F-2 dependents of the above mentioned F-1 students.

**NOTE**: This does not apply to students who obtain H-1B employment with an institution of higher learning, because such employers are exempt from the H-1B cap and can file H-1B petitions throughout the year with any start date.

**OPT/H-1B Timing example:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPT Dates</th>
<th>No earlier than 04/02/2013 – 04/01/2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>04/02/2014 – 09/30/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OPT automatically extended to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>09/30/2014 with H-1B change of status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>approved (see “cap gap” solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>information above)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| H-1B Start Date            | 10/01/2014                              |