

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit available to international students who have maintained F-1 status and have been enrolled full-time for at least one academic year. Approved OPT provide employment authorization for students to work in fields directly related to their program of study.

Post-Completion OPT

Post-completion OPT provides up to one year of practical training authorization after completion of studies. Students can apply up to 90 days before and up to 60 days after program end date. Graduate students who have completed all course work and only have thesis/dissertation remaining can apply for OPT.

- Post-completion OPT can be utilized once per each degree level. (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate)
- Application can be filed up to 90 days from the degree completion date.
- Applications must be received by USCIS within 30 days of issuance of the I-20 recommending OPT by the Office of International Affairs.
- USCIS processing for post-completion OPT can take up to 90 days.
- OPT cannot end more than 14 months after graduation or completion of degree requirements.
- Employment must not begin until after receipt of the employment authorization card and the begin date on the card has arrived.
- Post-completion OPT has a cumulative unemployment period of 90 days.
- Applying for post-completion OPT does not require an offer of employment.

STEM OPT Extension

Students who have received a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree in certain [STEM Approved Majors](#) (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) may be eligible to apply for a one-time 24-month extension of post-completion OPT.

- This extension can only be used twice over student's lifetime; not after each degree level, like post-completion OPT.
- The STEM extension can be filed up to 90 days from the expiration of the post completion OPT employment authorization (listed on the EAD card) but must be received by USCIS prior to that expiration date.
- USCIS processing for STEM OPT can take up to 90 days.
- The new STEM extension begins the day after the expiration of the post completion OPT authorization and ends 24 months later; no matter when approved. Students may continue to work while the application is pending if the application is submitted before the current EAD card expires for up to 180 days.

- Employers must be registered with the U.S. Government E-Verify employment verification system.
- STEM OPT has a cumulative unemployment period of 150 days during the 24-month extension.

More information on STEM OPT can be found a Study in the States [STEM OPT HUB](#).

To Apply For OPT

You will need:

- Completed [I-765](#)
- \$410 Check or Money order \$ payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- I-20 with OPT recommendation issued by TSU immigration advisor
- Passport Copy (Valid for at least 6 months into the future)
- F-1 Visa Page
- Most recent [I-94](#)
- Any previously issued Employment Authorization Cards
- Two passport size pictures with name and I-94 number on the back
- STEM Applicants must also submit a copy of their diploma or official transcript with confirming approved STEM degree
- STEM applicant must complete the [I-983](#) Training Plan with their employer prior to applying for the STEM Extension.