

Understanding Pre-Completion OPT

Planning for Fall 2026 and Beyond

International Services and Engagement Office (ISEO)

September 11, 2026

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this virtual presentation is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to constitute legal advice. Viewers are advised to seek professional legal advice or assistance regarding their specific circumstances. Furthermore, the content presented in this virtual presentation may be subject to change, and while we make every effort to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the information, we cannot guarantee that it is always up to date. Therefore, we do not accept any responsibility for any loss which may arise from reliance on information contained in this virtual presentation. Any action taken based on the information presented is at the viewer's own risk. By viewing this virtual presentation, viewers acknowledge and agree that the presenters and organizers are not liable for any direct or indirect damages or any damages whatsoever resulting from the use of the information presented.

It is important to consult with a qualified immigration attorney for individual advice regarding specific legal issues.

AGENDA

- Overview of F-1 Employment
- Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- Q&A

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

International Students on an F-1 Visa have the benefit of working in the U.S. during and after their program of study. However, depending on **when and where** you work, you will need to ensure you have the **proper permission** shown on a specific **document before** you begin working!

This document that reflects your permission to work is your **Employment Authorization**.

IMPORTANT!

DO NOT START WORKING WITHOUT EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

This webinar is being recorded.

DURING PROGRAM

(Maximum of 20 hours a week during academic year, may work full-time during vacation/breaks)

On-Campus Employment

Graduate Student Research, Teaching Assistants, Fellowships, Price Center, etc

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Off Campus Employment in respective field of study.

Severe Economic Hardship

Volunteering & Unpaid Internships

Volunteering for non-profits or engaging in educational opportunities without expectation of pay.

AFTER PROGRAM

(Minimum 20 hours a week)

Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- *Non-Student Appointments (Post-Doc Research or Instructor)*
- *Off-Campus Employment in respective field of study*
- *Volunteering & Unpaid Internships**

24 Month STEM OPT Extension

- *Non-Student Appointments (Post-Doc Research or Instructor)*
- *Off-Campus Employment in respective field of study*

WHAT IS Pre-Completion OPT

Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (Pre-Completion OPT) is a type of employment authorization for F-1 students that allows the student to work off-campus in a job directly related to their major/field of study **before** they complete their program of study.

It is an opportunity to participate in a **paid position off-campus in your field of study during** the time that you are pursuing your degree.

- ✓ Paid or Compensated (stipend, housing, gas and food, etc)
- ✓ Off-Campus
- ✓ Related to Major/field of study

PreOPT.ucsd.edu

Pre-Completion OPT ELIGIBILITY

- **Must have met the One Academic Year Requirement:** You must have been enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one academic year (3 quarters) on the same SEVIS number. (3 Quarters at UCSD at current program, SEVIS Transfer, Change of Status, Change of Level)
- You must be maintaining F1 status
- Course credit is NOT required
- A job offer is NOT required

PRE-COMPLETION OPT

INTERNATIONAL SERVICES AND ENGAGEMENT OFFICE

UC San Diego

Contact Us ▾Student Services ▾Scholar Services ▾Campus Partners ▾Resources ▾Programs and Events ▾

Q ▾

ISEO / Student Services / Working in the U.S. / F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) / Pre-Completion OPT

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Initial OPT

STEM Extension

Cap Gap Extension

Pre-Completion OPT

Frequently Asked Questions

Ending OPT

F-1 Pre-Completion OPT

Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (Pre-Completion OPT) is a type of employment authorization for F-1 students that allows the student to work off-campus in a job directly related to their major/field of study before they complete their program of study. Requests for Pre-Completion OPT require a recommendation from ISEO but are reviewed and granted solely by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). F-1 students may request up to 12 months of initial OPT, which can be split between Pre-Completion OPT and [Post-Completion OPT](#).

Before You Begin: Understand Pre-Completion OPT

+ [Expand All](#)

CPT or Pre-Completion OPT? Which should I use?

+

Eligibility Requirements

-

UC San Diego

HOW & WHEN TO APPLY

Pre-Completion OPT

Stage 1: Submit request in [iServices.ucsd.edu](https://iservices.ucsd.edu) (resubmit after attending this webinar!)

Stage 2: Submit to USCIS

Stage 3: Wait for USCIS Approval

RESOURCES

Resources

- iWork.ucsd.edu
- Career.ucsd.edu

Contacting ISEO: Review resources available. If you have case specific questions, find ways to connect with an ISEO Advisor by visiting iContact.ucsd.edu

PreOPT.ucsd.edu

UC San Diego

GLOBAL INITIATIVES

International Services and Engagement Office



@iseo.ucsd



@iseo.ucsd



@istudents.ucsd

@ischolars.ucsd

STAY
CONNECTED