



## Practical Training Overview

Practical training provides international students with experience in their field of study during or upon completion of a degree program in the United States. Students can have multiple training authorizations or receive an authorization and choose not to participate, which often results in a higher number of training authorizations than actual participants. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) authorizes some forms of practical training.

**Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Students:** Form of training, often paid, which directly relates to a student’s program of study and can take place during their program of study (pre-completion) or after finishing their program of study (post-completion).

**STEM OPT for F-1 Students:** 24-month extension of post-completion OPT for qualifying students with science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) degrees.

**Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for F-1 Students:** Alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education or other type of required practicum that a sponsoring employer offers through agreements with a student’s college or university.

### Differences between Training Opportunities:

	OPT	STEM OPT	CPT
<b>When it occurs:</b>	<b>Pre-completion OPT:</b> Occurs before a student’s program end date. <b>Post-completion OPT:</b> occurs after a student’s program end date, or after completion of all course requirements.	Occurs after regular post-completion OPT.	Occurs before a student’s program end date.
<b>Length Requirements:</b>	<b>Pre-completion OPT:</b> Up to 12 months; eligible for 12-month extension when a student changes to a higher education level.  <b>Post-completion OPT:</b> Usually up to 12 months, but all periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted. Periods cannot overlap.	Up to 24 months; students can participate twice if they reach a higher STEM education degree level.  Student may have multiple, concurrent employers. Periods of STEM OPT authorization cannot overlap.	N/A; one year or more of full-time CPT eliminates OPT eligibility at the same educational level.  Student can have more than one CPT authorization at the same time.
<b>Employer Requirements:</b>	Student can work for any employer, but the training must relate to the student’s major course of study.	Employer must be able to provide a minimum of 20 hours of training per week. Employer must be enrolled with USCIS through E-Verify.	Authorization is for one specific employer and for a specific period of time.

To review data about practical training and international student employment from specific calendar years, please visit the SEVP Data Library on [ICE.gov](https://ice.dhs.gov/sevp-data-library).