



F-1 Pre-Completion OPT

International Student Services – Texas A&M University

What is Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

- Pre-Completion OPT is temporary employment available to F-1 students prior to completion of the course of study (i.e. prior to the program end date on the I-20).
- The employment must be directly related to the student's field of study and commensurate with the student's education level.
- A student may be eligible for up to 12 months of OPT per degree level.
- A student will become eligible for another 12 months of OPT when he/she completes a higher educational level.
- A student must receive an EAD card from the USCIS Service Center and the start date on the EAD card must arrive before they may begin their OPT employment.

Who is eligible to apply for Pre-Completion OPT?

- An F-1 student who has completed full-time enrollment for at least one Fall and one Spring semester or who is within 90 days of doing so.
- A student who still has coursework remaining to complete his/her educational objective or degree program is limited to 20 hours per week of Pre-Completion OPT during the Fall and Spring semesters.
- All students may apply for full-time Pre-Completion during annual vacation (summer) and other official school breaks.
- Students may apply up to 120 days prior to their requested Pre-Completion OPT start date as long as they are within 90 days of attaining a complete academic year of full-time enrollment or they have already attained it.
- Students who work full-time for 12 months or more on Curricular Practical Training (CPT) are not eligible for OPT.

How does Pre-Completion OPT differ from Post-Completion OPT?

- Pre-Completion OPT occurs before the I-20 program end date. ISS will **not** shorten the I-20 program end date.
- Days of unemployment do not accrue during Pre-Completion OPT.
- A student may not be able to work full-time (see the section above).
- If a student does not graduate by the program end date on their I-20, the student may request an F-1 Extension of Stay.
- Students are **not** eligible to apply for the 17-month extension of OPT.
- Students are **not** eligible for the H-1B CAP GAP fix.

More information about Pre-Completion OPT is included on the reserve side of this handout.

How do I apply for Pre-Completion OPT?

1. Obtain ISS Recommendation

The following documents must be submitted to ISS:

- F-1 Pre-Completion OPT Student Form
- F-1 OPT Department Form
- Photocopies of the passport, visa, I-94 card and most recently issued I-20 for the student and any F-2 dependents

2. Mail the OPT Pre-Completion Application

Once the ISS recommendation is on the I-20, the student should mail a complete application to the appropriate U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Service Center. The application must be received by USCIS within 30 days after the ISS recommendation is issued on the new I-20. For details about what to mail and how to mail this application, see the *OPT Application Instructions and Forms* webpage (<http://international.tamu.edu/iss/employment/optapplication.asp>). USCIS will review the Pre-Completion OPT application (this can take several months). If the application is approved, USCIS will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

3. Maintain Responsibilities while on OPT

Understand your responsibilities while on OPT as listed on the F-1 Pre-Completion OPT Student Form, available on the *OPT Application Instructions and Forms* webpage (<http://international.tamu.edu/iss/employment/optapplication.asp>).

Additional Information

- As long as you remain enrolled, you are still required to maintain health insurance coverage (<https://international.tamu.edu/iss/main/iss.asp?gid=insurance&pid=insurance>). ISS strongly encourages you to maintain health insurance for you and your dependents throughout the duration of your OPT authorization period.
- You must keep your OPT employment information updated through the ISS OPT Data System (<https://international.tamu.edu/iss/employment/optds/default.asp>).
- Keep your local address updated through the Howdy Portal, “MyRecord” tab (<https://howdy.tamu.edu/>).