

How to hire international candidates – a guide.

Internship – CPT

[CPT – University of Rochester](#)

What is Curricular Practical Training (CPT)?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is an employment authorization for F-1 students. Eligible students may seek authorization to work in an internship, co-op, or practicum that is directly related to their major field of study. The purpose of CPT is to apply the knowledge and skills they are gaining in the classroom to practical work experience in the U.S.

Duration:

A student must have CPT authorization before they can start their practical training experience. CPT authorization is typically granted for one semester at a time, because authorization is contingent on enrollment in a specific course. There is no limit, but 12 months of full-time CPT eliminates eligibility for OPT. Part-time CPT employment does not affect eligibility for OPT.

Timeline:

It may take 15 business days to review and approve a student's CPT request. An F-1 student must request authorization from the school at which they are enrolled full-time with their F-1 I-20.

Full-Time – OPT

[OPT – University of Rochester](#)

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

OPT is work authorization that allows F-1 status students who have graduated to gain practical work experience related to their major field of study.

Duration:

12 months for F-1 students (Please note, any approved pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the 12 months OPT period.)

Timeline:

The USCIS processing time for OPT takes an average of 60 days but can take up to 3-4 months during peak OPT processing season (starting in February each year); therefore, students are encouraged to apply as early as 90 days prior to graduation. The new employee must have the EAD card in hand to start work.

Frequently Asked Questions – CPT/OPT

Does CPT/OPT require visa sponsorship?

CPT/OPT is not a separate visa category and does not require "sponsorship" from an employer.

Is there a cost associated with CPT/OPT?

There is no cost to the employer.

Who authorizes CPT/OPT?

CPT is authorized by the International Services Office (ISO) at the University of Rochester.

What do I need to do to hire a student on CPT/OPT?

Applying for CPT/OPT is solely the responsibility of the student. Once an F-1 student has accepted an offer from your company or organization, they will need an offer letter.

1. **Detailed Offer Letter**, on employer letterhead, including:
 - Official Employer Name, to be listed in SEVIS
 - Employer's Address (street address, including US zip code)
 - Address of employment, if different from Employer's Address
 - Start Date/End Date, and the expected number of hours per week
 - Job title and description of duties

OPT: STEM Extension

[OPT: STEM Extension – University of Rochester](#)

What is STEM Extension?

An additional 24 months of OPT work authorization (for a total of 36 months) allows F-1 student status holders who have graduated with an approved degree in Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) to gain extra practical work experience related to their STEM field.

- Eligible students can apply for this benefit based on a previous STEM degree earned in the US, provided it was completed within 10 years of the school's recommendation for the new STEM Extension.
- The STEM Extension is available twice during a student's lifetime, provided the second authorization period follows completion of a higher-level STEM degree than the first approved extension.
- During the authorized 24-month STEM Extension, a 150-day unemployment limit is available as an aggregate total over the three years of OPT and STEM Extension periods combined.

Duration:

24 months for F-1 graduates

Timeline:

The USCIS processing time for STEM OPT takes an average of up to 3-4 months, with some cases taking 5-6 months. The STEM OPT Extension must be filed prior to the expiration of the initial OPT period. If students file their STEM OPT extension applications on time and their OPT period expires while their extension application is pending, their work authorization is automatically extended for 180 days. (USCIS does not have to do anything, the regulations allow for the

automatic extension of the work authorization if the student timely files their STEM OPT application.)

Employer Role:

- Be enrolled and in good-standing with [E-Verify](#).
- The [Form I-983 Training Plan](#) must be maintained between the student and their employer, describing specific goals and achievement methods of the training opportunity, a performance evaluation process, and supervisory structure throughout the STEM Extension period. Form I-983 will need to be updated for any change(s) and submitted to ISO promptly.
- Employers must agree to certain employer responsibilities and criteria in order to host a STEM Extension trainee, including enrollment in E-Verify, verification of annual evaluations; protections for US workers under comparable duties, hours, and compensation; and reporting to ISO. Employers may also be subject to site visits from the US Department of Homeland Security to evaluate the training resources and structure.

Questions? Contact Brittney Turner, brittney.turner@rochester.edu, Employer Engagement Program Director