

Optional Practical Training Information for F-1 International Students at UTC

Optional Practical Training is temporary employment which is directly related to an F-1 international student's major area of study. Eligible students may receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion). The information presented below is based on that provided by [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services](https://uscis.gov). For the most up-to-date information, visit uscis.gov.

Types of OPT

All OPT must be directly related to the student's major area of study. Students may participate in OPT in two different ways:

- Pre-completion OPT: F-1 students may apply to participate in pre-completion OPT after they have been enrolled in school for one full academic year. Students authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT must work part-time while school is in session. They may work full-time when school is not in session.
- Post-completion OPT: F-1 students may apply to participate in post-completion OPT after completing their studies. Students who are authorized for post-completion OPT may work part-time (at least 20 hours per week) or full-time.

NOTE: Students may participate in OPT both before and after completing their studies. However, all periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.

24-month STEM OPT Extension

Students who have earned degrees in certain science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields may apply for a 24-month extension of their post-completion OPT employment authorization if they:

- Are an F-1 student who received a STEM degree included on the STEM Designated Degree Program List available at ice.gov,
- Are employed by an employer enrolled in [E-Verify](https://e-verify.com), AND
- Were initially granted post-completion OPT employment authorization based on their STEM degree.

If you are interested in applying for a STEM OPT extension, please visit utc.edu/international or contact your international student advisor.

Applying for OPT

If you are an F-1 student who wishes to apply for OPT, you must:

1. Attend one of the OPT information sessions held regularly by the Office of International Student and Scholar Services at UTC.
2. Complete and submit the OPT Request Form. ISSS will make a recommendation by endorsing your Form I-20 and making the appropriate notation in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. Please allow three to five business days for your new I-20 to be issued.
3. Properly file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, with USCIS, along with the required fee payment and any required supporting documentation as described in the form instructions.

After receiving a job offer, you must email international@utc.edu a copy of the job offer letter, printed on company letterhead and addressed to you. The letter must contain the following information:

- Job title
- Job description (as relates to your major)
- Beginning and ending dates of employment
- Name, phone number, and email address of your direct supervisor
- Physical location of the job
- Wage
- Number of hours per week to be worked
- The company's employer identification number
- The current date

Once you have received OPT approval and obtained an Employment Authorization Document (i.e. EAD card), you must email international@utc.edu a copy of your EAD card.

If you move to a new address while on extended OPT, you must submit a Change of Address Request to the Office of International Student and Scholar Services so your SEVIS record may be updated. Report to ISSS every six months to confirm the information listed above, even if none of your information has changed. This is required by USCIS.

Contact Information

Eunice Davis

International Undergraduate Student Advisor/DSO/ARO
eunice-davis@utc.edu / (423) 425-2110

Lora Cook

International Graduate Student Advisor/DSO/ARO
lora-cook@utc.edu / (423) 425-4348