A student is eligible for 12 months of OPT per degree level. OPT can be used before or after you graduate. Any OPT time you use before you graduate is deducted from the twelve months allowed. Part-time, pre-completion, OPT is deducted on a part-time basis. Two months of part-time pre-completion OPT is only deducted as one month.

- **Pre-Completion OPT**: Applicable to students who intend to do a paid practical training while they are pursuing a degree.
  - Employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
  - F-1 students may be authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT after they have been enrolled for one full academic year (a Fall and Spring semester).
  - Students authorized to participate in pre-completion OPT must work part-time (20 OR fewer hours) for the duration of the approval.
  - You **may not** work full-time if your OPT has been recommended and approved for part-time authorization.
  - You can only request full-time, pre-completion, OPT during the fall or spring semester if you have met all degree requirements or during school breaks.
  - You must remain registered for a full-course of study during the Fall and Spring semesters while engaged in Pre-completion OPT.
  - Students who have not yet met the full academic year requirement can file for pre-completion OPT no sooner than 90 days before meeting that requirement.
  - Students who have already met the one academic year requirement may apply for pre-completion OPT up to 90 days in advance of the requested employment start date.

- **Post-Completion OPT**: Applicable to students who intend to do a paid or non-paid practical training after they complete their program of study.
  - F-1 students may be authorized to participate in post-completion OPT after they have been enrolled for one full academic year (a Fall and Spring semester).
  - Post-completion OPT can only be authorized full-time.
  - Employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
  - Students can file for post-completion OPT up to 90 days before meeting degree requirements.
Students may file the application for post completion OPT no more than 60 days after they have met degree requirement. USCIS must receive the application and log it into their system:

- Within 30 days of the OPT recommendation made by ISSS
  - If for any reason you do not mail your application to the USCIS with 30 days of the OPT recommendation, the recommendation must be reissued by ISSS.
- Within 60 days of your meeting degree requirements
  - The application for post-completion opt must be received by the USCIS and keyed into their system. If the USCIS receives your post-completion OPT application on the 60th day after you meet degree requirements, but don’t key it into their system until the 61st or 62nd day, it could be rejected.

- You must apply for post-completion OPT before departing the U.S after you complete your degree requirements. You cannot meet degree requirements, re-enter the U.S. during the 60-day grace period, and then apply for post-completion OPT.

- There is no change to your visa status. You will remain in F-1 status for the duration of your OPT.

**STEM OPT Extensions:** For the special 24-month extension of OPT for students with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medical) majors.

- Your employer must be enrolled in the E-verify program.
- Students can file for STEM OPT Extensions no sooner than 90 days before the post-completion OPT expiration date.
- Student must still be in their authorized period of post-completion OPT when applying for STEM.
- You are eligible to apply for up to two STEM extensions.

*New STEM Extension of OPT Regulations Effective May 10, 2016:*

On Friday, March 11, 2016, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published a new STEM OPT regulation which will replace the current regulations and allow STEM OPT to continue.

These new regulations will not be effective until May 10, 2016.
**BACKGROUND:** Because of a court order, the current STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) extension regulations will expire on May 10, 2016. On May 10, 2016, these new regulations will replace the current regulations and allow STEM OPT to continue.

**NEW STEM OPT REGULATION:** The new regulations will allow a 24-month STEM OPT extension (instead of the current 17 months), but will add some additional requirements. For example, the student and the STEM OPT employer will be required to complete a “Training Plan for STEM Students (Form I-983)” that will apply to the STEM OPT employment, and the STEM OPT employer will be required to pay the same salary they pay other employees who do similar work and have similar amounts of experience.

**WHAT TO DO NOW:**

- If you currently have a STEM extension of Optional Practical Training, you can continue working as usual. Your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will remain valid through its current end date. After the new rule is effective, you may be eligible to apply for an additional seven months of OPT.
- If you are currently on an authorized period of OPT and have a STEM Extension pending:
  - If your application is approved before May 10, 2016, your OPT extension will be for 17 months. After May 10, 2016, when the new rule is effective, you may be eligible to apply for an additional seven months of OPT.
  - If your application is still pending on May 10, 2016, you will be issued a “request for further evidence” (RFE) and be required to provide documentation showing that you are eligible for the new 24-month OPT extension, including a new I-20 issued by this office.

Students applying for a STEM extension of OPT on or after May 10, 2016, will follow the new procedures outlined in the new regulations.

For more information on STEM OPT information from the Department of Homeland Security, please see [https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub](https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub).
All students applying for OPT follow these steps:

1. **Read this handout.** It has been developed to answer the questions most frequently asked by students.
2. Have the Academic Advisor form (in this handout) completed by your academic advisor. That is the person in your academic department who helps you with registration, academic advising, etc.
3. Review the advisors’ form. The advisor must fill in the “*date student will meet degree requirements*”
4. Complete the OPT student request form (in this handout). You must choose a “start date” for your employment
   - For Post-completion OPT the start date must be within 60 days of your program completion date.
   - For pre-completion OPT the start should be selected based on the fact that the application takes approximately 2 to 3 months (sometimes longer) to be approved.
5. It is highly recommended that you attend an ISSS OPT information session before you apply.
6. Submit the OPT application to ISSS any time during office hours. **We will not review the application during walk-in hours. The application will be reviewed when the advisor makes the OPT recommendation.**
7. **DO NOT STAPLE ANY MATERIALS TOGETHER.**
8. The International Student Advisor will thoroughly review your application and upon determining that you are maintaining your status, makes a recommendation for the OPT. Again, please do not bring the packet in during walk-in hours for a review.
9. You will be emailed when the OPT packet is ready to be picked up. We require a minimum of five business days. Please be sure to check your e-mail account regularly.
10. You must come back to the ISSS to collect your packet after it has been reviewed, sign the new I-20 that was generated by the advisor recommending OPT, and mail the application to the USCIS.
11. You must make sure you mail the OPT application to the USCIS within 30 days of the OPT recommendation.
12. USCIS reviews and notifies you of the decision. This generally takes between 60 and 90 days.
13. **You must receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS before your employment begins.**
14. Any paid jobs you have during your OPT period must relate to your major field of study.

**OPT General Notes:**

- You cannot continue working under a pre-completion OPT authorization after you complete your program of study.
- If you want to work part-time in your final semester and then full-time after meeting degree requirements, that would be two separate applications, two separate fees, etc.
- OPT employment must be directly related to the student's course of study and should also be commensurate with the level of the student's study.
Again, the OPT application you submit will be reviewed by ISSS. You will be informed of any missing materials. You will receive an e-mail from the ISSS to your @temple.edu e-mail account when the packet is ready. You must pick up the packet, review it, and mail the application to USCIS. Mailing instructions will be provided with the OPT recommendation. Please do not bring in the application during walk-in hours to be reviewed prior to submission. We review it entirely before we make the OPT recommendation.

Additional information for Students Applying for Post-Completion OPT only:

- Double Majors: The OPT must be directly related to the degree you received. Example: if you complete a degree in Biology in December 20XX and continue studying for a degree in History your post-completion OPT would be based on the most recently completed degree, History. If you meet degree requirements for both degrees in the same semester, then you can choose which to “use” for OPT. If you have two majors, you must ensure that ISSS has updated your SEVIS record with both majors before you apply for OPT.
- OPT applications must be properly filed with USCIS within 60 days of meeting degree requirements at the latest.
- Start date for post completion OPT must be within the 60 days of meeting degree requirements.
- The OPT packet must be submitted to the USCIS within 30 days of the OPT recommendation.
- During post-completion OPT, F-1 status is dependent upon employment. During any initial 12-month period of post-completion OPT; no student may be unemployed for an aggregate of more than 90 days. If a STEM student receives a 17-month (or 24-month) extension, the limit on unemployment is raised to an aggregate of no more than 120 days, applied to the entire 29-month (or 36-month) period on which the student is on post completion OPT.
- You are required to report any change of name or address, or interruption of such employment to the ISSS for the duration of the authorized training. Submit “http://www.temple.edu/isss/home/documents/optreportingform_001.pdf” form available in OPT section of this web site.

Part-time vs full-time OPT:

Pre-completion OPT may be requested on a part-time or full-time basis. Each request is separate and requires a separate application, separate fee, and separate photos. Here’s an example: You want to work for an academic year. You want to work part-time during the spring semester, full-time during the summer and part-time during the following fall semester. You have to apply for part-time pre-completion OPT from January – May, a separate OPT application for full-time from May to August and then another OPT application for part-time from September to December. Each application would require a separate fee, etc. Your employment authorization would have to be continuous throughout, or you would have to stop working. You can only avoid 3 separate applications if you applied for one year of part-time pre-completion OPT and only worked part-time during the summer.
You are eligible for 12 months of OPT per educational level

- Part-time pre-completion OPT is deducted from the 12-month limit at 50%. Therefore, four months of part-time pre-completion OPT deducts two months from the 12 you are allowed.
- CPT does not effect OPT at all UNLESS you are authorized for 12 months of full-time CPT employment. Any less than 12 months of full-time CPT does not deduct any time from your 12 months of OPT.

Additional 24 months for students studying in STEM field

- This extension may be requested up to two times for two different levels of STEM degree programs (For example: If you earned a Bachelor’s in Biology, you could apply for the first STEM extension and if you later earned a Master’s in Engineering, you could apply for the second STEM extension).

Additional reporting requirements for students authorized for STEM extension:

- The student must report to ISSS every 6 months by submitting an updated I-983 and the OPT reporting form (http://www.temple.edu/isss/home/documents/optreportingform_001.pdf) even if the employment has not changed.
- The requirement to report continues if the student’s 24-month STEM extension is extended further by the automatic cap-gap extension.

Offer of employment

- No offer of employment is required upon submission of the post-completion OPT application
- There is no written requirement for paid employment. However, a student should not “volunteer” to work at a job that is normally paid. For Department of Labor regulations regarding volunteering please see: https://www.temple.edu/isss/general/volunteering.html
SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS TO ISSS TO APPLY FOR OPT: DO NOT STAPLE ANY DOCUMENTS TOGETHER

- **Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance** (this form is optional)
- Photocopies of ALL prior Forms I-20. Make sure you have your “initial” I-20. If you are missing any forms I-20 you need to write a letter to the USCIS explaining what happened to the I-20s (lost, etc.). Address the letter “To whom it may concern”
- Academic advisor form included in this packet (not required for STEM extensions)
  - STEM Applicant should submit copy of diploma and a letter from employer confirming employment
- Student request form for OPT recommendation included in this packet. Make sure you have selected the start and end dates of the employment. Instructions for choosing the dates are on the “Student request for OPT Recommendation” (not required for STEM extensions – the extension starts the day after your current OPT ends). We cannot make the recommendation without it. It must be in date format: mm/dd/yy – NOT “Early June”
- Write a check payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for $380.00
- Obtain two passport-style photos; 2” x 2”, white background, includes shoulders and up.
  - For passport-style photo guidelines, go to: https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/photos/photo-examples.html
  - Photos must be identical color photographs of yourself taken within 30 days of filing your application. The photos must have a white to off-white background, be printed on paper with a glossy finish, and be unmounted and unretouched.
  - The passport-style photos must be 2" by 2". The photos must be in color with full face, frontal view on a white to off white background. Head height should measure 1 to 13/8" from bottom of photo. Your head must be bare unless you are wearing headwear as required by a religious order of which you are a member. Using pencil or felt pen, lightly print your name and date of birth on the back of the photo.
- Submit I-94. If you have an actual card stapled in your passport, copy the front and back. If you do not have a card, get your I-94 card online: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/consent.html
- Copy of any previous EAD cards front and back. You would only have an EAD card if you applied for some type of employment authorization before (not CPT)
- Copy of your current registration (available through TuPortal and not required for STEM extensions)
- Copy of your academic history at Temple (available through TuPortal and not required for STEM extensions)
- Copy of Transcripts from ALL US schools that you have attended (originals are not required, print-outs and copies are fine; not required for STEM extensions). If you’ve only attended Temple, then just submit the TuPortal academic history.
- Copy of your F-1 visas
- Copy of most recent entry stamp - the date that matches the I-94 card
☐ Copy of your unexpired passport photo and passport validity page(s).
☐ Copy of ALL I-20s you were issued. The very first I-20 you were issued will be marked “initial attendance” or “initial attendance – change of status requested”. You must supply copies of I-20s issued from that date forward.

FOR STEM EXTENSIONS, SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS:
Submit a copy of your diploma for which you are applying for the STEM extension, Form I-983 (https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/I-983.pdf), two to three recent paystubs (if you are currently employed with the STEM employer), and an offer letter of employment.
**OPT Student Request Form**  
*(To be completed by the student)*

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<td>OPT Type:</td>
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*Remember: You are eligible for 12 months of OPT per academic level. If you have used 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) during your current program, you are no longer eligible for OPT; however, any less than 12 months of full-time CPT used does not deduct from your OPT eligibility. Any amount of part-time CPT does not deduct from OPT eligibility.*

**CHOOSING YOUR OPT DATES:**
If you feel that you will be able to find employment quickly upon completing your program, you should pick an early start date. If you feel that you are going to take some time to find employment, you should pick a start date that is close to or at the end of your 60-day grace period.

After your Academic Advisor completes the OPT Advisor Form you must select the date you want the OPT to begin and end. Refer to the “Specific Date of Completion” your advisor listed on the form to determine your date preference.

You must select a requested beginning date and end date for OPT. It must be in date format: Month/Day/Year. “Sometime in June” or “early May” is not a date. The I-20 you need to apply for OPT cannot be generated by our office without a specific start and end date.

If you are meeting degree requirements, the start date must be within 60 days of the completion date indicated by your academic advisor on the OPT Advisor Form.

You may only apply for a total of 12 months full-time OPT (subtract any time you’ve already used). For example, if you will meet degree requirements on May 9th, the OPT can begin any day from May 10, 20XX through July 7th, 20XX.

You can go to the following website to calculate your dates: [http://www.timeanddate.com/date/duration.html](http://www.timeanddate.com/date/duration.html). If this link doesn’t work for you, do an internet search for “date calculators” and you’ll find one that does.
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<th><strong>OPT Advisor Form</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>This form is not to be completed by the student or by the staff of International Student and Scholar Services</strong></td>
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**Student’s Name:**  

**TU ID#:**  
**Field of Study:**  

**Beginning Date of Current Degree:**  

**☑ Bachelor’s ☑ Master’s ☑ PhD ☑ Other**  

**Total # of Credits Needed to Receive Degree:**  

**Total # of Credits Accumulated to Date:**  

**Has this student continuously completed a full course of study? ☑ Yes ☑ No. If not, please explains why student has fallen below full-time status in the section to the right:**  

**Note: Graduate students must complete 9 credits hours per Spring and Fall Semesters – Graduate Students with a Teaching/Research Assistantship may register for and complete a minimum of six (6) credits per semester. Undergraduate students must complete a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester.**  

**SPECIFIC DATE of degree completion [date by which student will meet program requirements (i.e. date of last class, dissertation defense, thesis submission, last exam) [NOT DATE OF GRADUATION CEREMONY]:**  

**Must be in month/day/year format – please do not fill in the semester**  

**Advisor’s Name:**  

**Advisor’s Signature:**  

**Advisor’s Email:**  

**Date:**