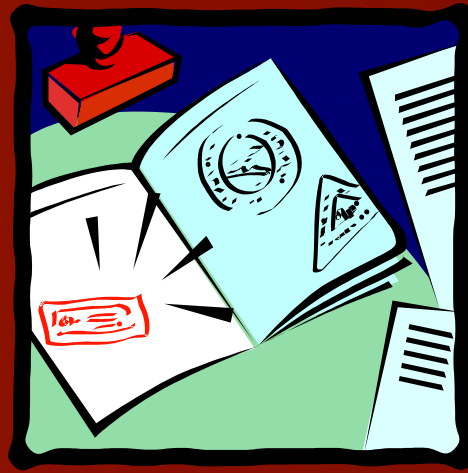# CPT and OPT: Information for Employers

Important Terms

- Form I-20 "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status" document that shows the student's details and eligibility regarding their F-1 status
- F-1 Student visa – nonimmigrant visa for study in the US
- SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) –
  - Online database used by the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State to monitor international students and exchange visitors in the US.
- DSO – Designated School Official
  - Certain University staff members with access to SEVIS. Only DSOs are allowed to update a student's SEVIS record/I-20.
- USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services)
  - The government agency that adjudicates applications for immigration benefits such as Optional Practical Training (OPT) employment authorization and changes of visa status.

What is CPT?

- CPT is an integral part of the established curriculum which allows students to engage in training that is required or optional. These include internships, externships, co-ops, or practicums.

- CPT is done DURING the student's degree program (before graduation)

- CPT generally follows semester dates and is authorized semester by semester

- Student is still in F-1 visa status

CPT Regulations

- The work experience is an "integral part of the established curriculum"
- The work is offered through a cooperative agreement between the University and the employer
  - A job offer letter meets this requirement.
  - Job offer letter must include:
    - Supervisor's name
    - Start and end dates (generally matching the semester dates)
    - Hours per week
    - Job description
    - Work location

CPT Regulations, continued

- CPT is only authorized for a specific employer, location, and dates
- It can be part-time (20 hours or less) or full-time (over 20 hours)
- 12 months or more of full-time CPT will make students ineligible for OPT
- Part-time CPT does not impact eligibility for OPT
- A CPT I-20 must be issued prior to beginning employment. The CPT authorization shows on page 2 of the I-20.

Optional Practical Training

- Optional Practical Training (OPT)
  - Employment must be related to the field of study
  - Must apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card through USCIS
  - Student receives 12 months of OPT
- Two types of OPT:
  - Pre-completion OPT – done while studying in program
    - Can work only part time (20 hours or less per week) while school is in session
    - Can work full time (20 or more hours per week) on school breaks/holidays
  - Post-completion OPT – done after student has completed all course work (usually in conjunction with graduation)
    - Work must be full time (20 or more hours per week)

OPT – How to Apply

- **Application procedures**
  - Application window
    - Student can apply 90 days before and within 60 days after graduation (or program end date)
  - No job offer needed
  - Student applies for and obtains the OPT I-20 from our office
  - Student mails documents to USCIS – Includes the Form I-765
  - Allow 2 -3 months for processing the application
    - Recently it's been taking at least 90 to 100 days to process

OPT Approved!

- Student receives Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
  - Student can only begin work with EAD in hand, AND
  - As of start date listed on EAD
- Student maintains F-1 status
  - Employment must be related to major
  - Can be paid or unpaid
  - Must be full-time (at least 20 hours per week)
  - 90 day limit on unemployment time
- Student follows reporting requirements
  - Student reports employment to our office
  - Change of address
  - SEVP Portal (optional)

STEM OPT
24 month extension of OPT

- 24-month extension of post-completion OPT available for STEM majors

- Student must file application within last 90 days of post-completion OPT. Processing time approximately 3 months.
  - Student may continue to work for employer without receipt of new EAD for up to 180 days

- Employer's responsibility
  - Must be a paid job or job offer
  - Student must work at least 20 hours per week
  - Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify
  - Must work with student to complete and sign Form I-983

- Student's responsibility
  - Completes Form I-983 with employer and submits to our office; We issue STEM OPT I-20 to student
  - Student submits all required documents to USCIS

STEM OPT Reporting Requirements

- Student reporting
  - Every 6-months
  - One-year evaluation (employer must sign)
    - Page 5 of the I-983
- Employer reporting
  - If employment ends earlier than STEM OPT end date, employer must report this to the DSO by sending email within 5 days of termination date
  - Material changes or Modifications to I-983
    - if material changes to the training plan, then employer and student complete new I-983
    - Examples of material changes: change of EIN number, decrease in work hours or compensation, etc.
  - Employer must sign 'one-year evaluation' and 'final evaluation' (page 5 of the I-983)
- Employer site visits - Department of Homeland Security may perform site visit to employer location

Cap-Gap Extension of OPT

- Related to transition of F-1 status to H-1B work visa
- Eligible when OPT expires before H-1B status begins (on October 1st)
- For Fiscal Year 2019, extends OPT or STEM OPT to 9/30/2018. H-1B employment, if approved, begins 10/1/2018
- Student's SEVIS record automatically updated and new I-20 can be printed to show the extension

Useful Websites

- OPT
  - [USCIS OPT for F-1 Students](#)

- STEM OPT
  - [I-983](#)
  - [Study in the States](#)
  - [USCIS OPT Extension for STEM Students](#)
  - [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#)

- Cap-Gap Extension
  - [USCIS - Cap Gap Extension](#)

- I-9
  - Form I-9 https://www.uscis.gov/i-9
  - Evidence of immigration status https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/70-evidence-status-certain-categories

Who to contact about CPT/OPT

- Main Contacts:
  - Emily Aronson, Assistant Director, Immigration Services.
  - Jung Shin, International Student Advisor, Immigration Services
- Alternate Contact:
  - Robyn Brown, Executive Director, Global Engagement.

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