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.
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
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.

International Center
The University of Akron
Buchtel Hall Room 202, Akron OH 44325-4724
Phone: (330) 972-6349
immigration@uakron.edu