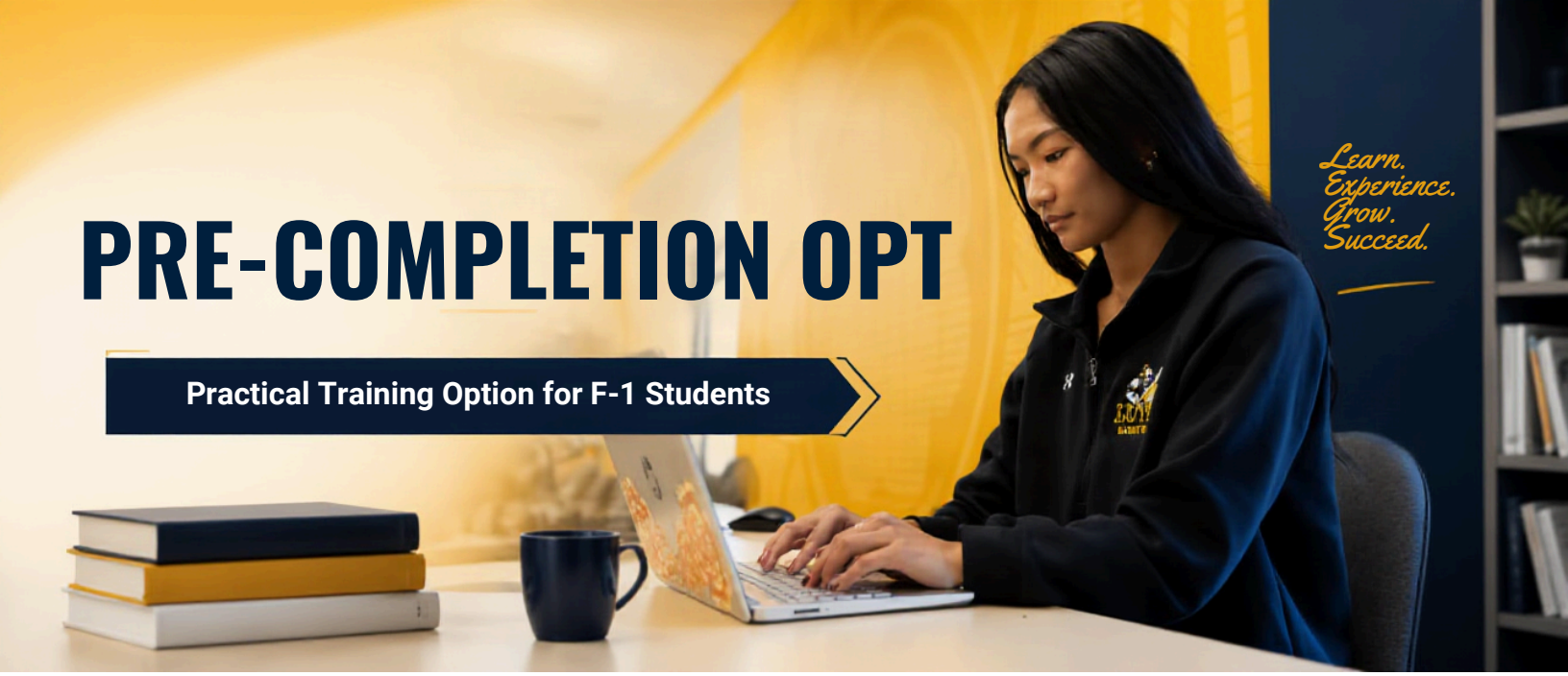


Pre-Completion OPT: Off-Campus Work Authorization for Current Students

At a glance

Pre-completion OPT is a benefit that allows students in F-1 status to participate in off-campus training or employment that is directly related to their major field of study **during** their academic program. This work authorization is issued by USCIS for a specific period of time, not to exceed the student's I-20 program end date. A job offer is not required before applying.

Eligibility

A student is eligible for pre-completion OPT when:

- They are currently in the U.S. in valid F-1 status
- They have been enrolled full-time for at least one academic year or will be completing one academic year within 90 days of applying
- They have not completed more than 365 days of full-time CPT at their current degree level
- They have not previously completed a higher degree level in the U.S.
- They have not previously been approved for 12 months of OPT at the current degree level or a higher degree level
- They will only pursue employment directly related to their field of study

Hourly Limits

- **Part-time pre-completion OPT:** 20 hours or less per week. Students are limited to part-time authorization during fall/spring semesters and during summer term if it is a required term.
- **Full-time pre-completion OPT:** More than 20 hours per week. Full-time pre-completion OPT is only an option during school breaks.

Impact on Post-Completion OPT

Students are eligible for 12 months of optional practical training per degree level (not including the 24-month STEM OPT Extension). Pre-completion OPT will count against that 12-month total and reduce the time available for post-completion OPT. The period of pre-completion OPT authorized by USCIS will be deducted from the time available for post-completion OPT, even if the student doesn't work during some or all of the authorized time.

- **Part-time pre-completion OPT** (20 hrs/week or less) is deducted from post-completion OPT at a half-time rate. For example, 4 months of pre-completion OPT deducts 2 months from the time available for post-completion OPT.
- **Full-time pre-completion OPT** (more than 20 hrs/week) is deducted from post-completion OPT at a full-time rate. For example, if a student is approved for 3 months of full-time pre-completion OPT, they will be eligible for only 9 months of post-completion OPT.

Pre-Completion OPT Authorization Dates

Students applying for pre-completion OPT must select start and end dates for their authorization before ISS will issue a new I-20 recommending pre-completion OPT. Start and end dates cannot be changed after the application is filed with USCIS.

- The requested start date must be after the student has completed one academic year.
- The requested end date cannot go beyond the I-20 program end date.
- Pre-completion OPT can be requested for a minimum of one day and a maximum of 12 months at a time.

Talk to your international advisor to learn more about Pre-Completion OPT!