

## **Employment for F-1 International Students**

As an F-1 International student your focus should be to pursue your program of study, explore the academic opportunities available on campus, and experience New York City. The Office of International Student and Scholar Services advise every F-1 student to focus on his or her academic goals. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) permit limited employment options for international students in F-1 student status. For all the different work options, eligibility for an F-1 student is generally defined as a student in good academic standing and maintaining lawful status in addition to other requirements mentioned below.

### **On-Campus Employment**

**Eligibility:** *valid F-1 status and enrolled full-time (at least 12 credits for Undergraduate students and at least 9-12 credits for Graduate students per semester except summer and winter sessions). Contact the Designated School Official (DSO) for on-campus employment work authorization.*

The work must only be performed on the premises of Brooklyn College or any City University of New York (CUNY) campus. You can work anywhere on-campus as long as the work provides a direct service to students. Examples are: school library, labs, bookstore, tutoring, and student service departments. Keep in mind that there is limited On-Campus Employment at Brooklyn College. For employment opportunities (part-time only) within CUNY, visit [www.cuny.edu](http://www.cuny.edu).

**Duration and Hours per Week:** you can work on-campus up to 20 hours per week when school is in session and more than 20 hours during official school breaks. To work during a break (e.g. spring, summer and winter), you must (or intend to) be registered full time for the coming semester.

### **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) defines Curricular Practical Training (CPT) as employment which is an integral part of an established curriculum, including: “alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.” [8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(i)]. CPT is available only prior to the completion of your degree program and you must have a job offer at the time of application. Keep in mind that CPT is rare. There are very few paid internships. ISS will work with your academic department to make a determination if you qualify for CPT.

#### **Eligibility:**

- have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis as an F-1 student for one full academic year;
- currently be maintaining a full-time program of study and valid F-1 status; and,
- have an internship offer.

#### **Types of CPT:**

- *Required part of program- the program requires employment in the field of study to graduate.*
- *Non-required part of program- the practical experience is for credit and directly related to your field of study. You must be enrolled for the course while engaging in this type of CPT.*

#### **Duration and Hours per Week:**

*You cannot participate in CPT for more than 20 hours a week while school is in session. Additionally, you must be registered full-time while you are on part-time CPT. (Full-time CPT might be an option but is extremely rare.)*

**IMPORTANT:** If you are authorized for Curricular Practical Training totaling 12 months of full-time work or more, you lose your eligibility for all Optional Practical Training.

### **Employment Based on Economic Hardship (Off-Campus Employment)**

Sometimes an F-1 student can get permission to work off-campus if evidence is found of economic hardship. The job does not need to be in the field you are studying. Examples of economic hardships are: unexpected increases in tuition and/or cost of living expenses, medical bills, or unexpected changes in the financial condition of your sponsor. Authorization for Off-Campus Employment by USCIS can be difficult to obtain. It requires documented evidence that proves that you have financial problems caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond your control. It can take several months for USCIS to come up with a decision.

#### ***Eligibility:***

- lawful F-1 status and enrolled full-time for at least one academic year.
- in good academic standing.
- you must explain how On-Campus Employment has been either unavailable or insufficient to meet your needs.
- you must be registered for courses full-time and working will not interfere with your studies.
- you must be able to provide evidence proving that financial problems were caused by circumstances beyond your control.

#### ***Duration and Hours per Week:***

- You can work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session and full-time during vacation periods.
- USCIS authorizes Off-Campus Employment for 1-year periods. Renewals are possible.

**IMPORTANT:** Only U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) can grant you authorization for Off-Campus Employment. Often, this request is denied. If you feel that you are indeed a qualified candidate for this type of employment, contact the DSO. An I-20 with the recommendation for Off Campus Employment/Economic Hardship, Form I-765, 2 passport-type photos and a fee of \$410 in the form of a check or money order made payable to the “Department of Homeland Security” are required.

### **\*Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

Optional Practical Training for F-1 students is intended to provide hands-on practical work experience complementary to the academic program. An F-1 student is eligible for a **maximum of 12 months of full-time employment**. If a student begins a new academic program at a higher level (e.g. Master’s after Bachelor’s degree, or PhD after Master’s), you can be eligible for another 12 months of OPT. **Pre-completion OPT** is an option while you are still pursuing your studies, but most students prefer **Post-Completion OPT**. In other words, after graduation you are eligible to work full-time in the U.S. for up to 1 year at a job that is directly related to your major area of study. Pre-completion OPT (up to 20 hours per week) while you are still pursuing your program of study exists, but the amount of time you use will be deducted from the full 12 months of Post-Completion OPT in which you are eligible for. OPT must be approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If you are considering Post-Completion OPT, contact the DSO 3 months prior to the last day of your final semester.

#### ***Eligibility:***

To be eligible for Optional Practical Training, you must:

- have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year;
- currently be maintaining a full-time program of study and valid F-1 status; and
- work in a job directly related to your major field of study.

• *have not previously used your full 12 months of Optional Practical Training or used more than 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training.*

You will be able to file the OPT application up to 90 days before the program completion date, and up to 60 days after the program completion date. However, the OPT application must be submitted to the USCIS within 30 days of the date on which the DSO issues an OPT I-20. 2 passport-type photos and a fee of \$410 (check or money order) made payable to the "Department of Homeland Security" are required along with a Form I-765 and copies of all prior I-20's, copy of I-94 and passport identification pages, and any prior EAD's (Employment Authorization Document) issued.

\*PERIODS OF UNEMPLOYMENT WHILE ON OPT: 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.

### **Social Security Card**

You will need a social security card if you have On-Campus Employment, paid Optional Practical Training (OPT) or paid Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Social security cards are only issued if you have authorized employment and; have a job or a job offer on-campus, or have an employment authorization document (EAD card) from the Department of Homeland Security. Contact the DSO for further information.

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F-1 International Student Web Site  
<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/about/offices/iss.php>