

F-1 International Student Employment FAQs

Check out the answers to these frequently asked questions (FAQs) and definitions of common terms before applying for on-campus employment, off-campus employment, CPT or OPT.

If you have questions AFTER reading this, please contact the International Programs Office at internationalprograms@stfrancis.edu.

Important Terms to Know

On-Campus Employment: For F-1 students, this is work that takes place either at your school or at an off-campus location that is educationally affiliated with your school. This work could be for an on-campus commercial business, like a bookstore or cafeteria, as long as the work directly provides services for students.

Off-Campus Employment(economic hardship): For an F-1 student who has maintained F-1 status for one full academic year and is in good academic standing may apply to USCIS for off-campus employment based on unforeseen severe economic hardship. To qualify for this type of employment, the student must document the economic hardship and show that part-time employment opportunities on campus are insufficient to meet the student's needs. Students are required to make a good faith effort in locating employment on campus before applying for off-campus employment based on economic hardship.

Economic Hardship: Economic hardship refers to financial problems caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control. Financial problems may be the result of a student losing a graduate assistantship, the death of financial sponsor, inflation in the home country causing the devaluation of currency or the exchange rate, unusually high increases in tuition and/or living expenses, and so on.

CPT(Curricular Practical Training): CPT must be employment that is an integral part of an established curriculum. It is available to students in F-1 status who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one full academic year. To be considered CPT, the work must not only be related to the major field of study but must also be an integral or important part of the established curriculum. ***Students in English-language programs are ineligible for practical training.

OPT(Optional Practical Training): Students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one academic year in a SEVIS-approved college, university, conservatory, or seminary are eligible for optional practical training (OPT), which is defined generally as temporary employment directly related to the student's field of study, for purposes of gaining practical experience. ***Students in English-language programs are ineligible for practical training.

Social Security Number: In the United States, a Social Security number (SSN) is a nine-digit number issued to U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and temporary (working) residents. The number is issued to an individual by the Social Security Administration, an independent agency of the United States government. Its primary purpose is to track individuals for Social Security purposes.

On-Campus Employment FAQs

- **Am I eligible to work on-campus?** Yes! International students on an F-1 visa are eligible to work on campus, this includes ELAP and degree-seeking students as long as you meet the requirements in the job posting. All open student positions you are eligible to apply for can be found here: <https://www.stfrancis.edu/employment-ads/positions/>
- **How do I apply for on-campus employment?** Follow the instructions listed on the job posting to apply for your on-campus job and contact your international advisor if you have any questions throughout the application process.
- **How many hours a week can I work at my on-campus job?** F-1 visa students are eligible to work up to 20 hours a week when school is in session and full-time during annual vacations.
- **Will my I-20 need to be updated if I start working on campus?** No. Your I-20 will not need to be updated if you start working on campus. But you need to be sure to notify your international advisor as soon as you accept on-campus employment.
- **Why do I need to notify my international advisor when I accept on-campus employment if my I-20 doesn't need to be updated?** Because your international advisor is going to provide you with a letter verifying your on-campus employment that you need to apply for your social security number.
- **Why do I need a social security number?** You must have a social security card if you want to get paid. To apply for a social security number you will need to complete an application and submit it with the letter from your international advisor.

Off-Campus Employment (economic hardship) FAQs

- **Am I eligible to apply for off-campus work (NOT CPT or OPT?)** You are eligible to apply for off-campus work that is not CPT or OPT only if you meet the below requirements:
 - You have maintained F-1 status for one full academic year
 - Must be suffering from severe unforeseen economic hardship

- Must be able to show that part-time on-campus employment opportunities are insufficient to meet your economic needs
 - You have already made an effort to find employment on campus
- **How many hours a week can I work at my off-campus job?** F-1 visa students are eligible to work up to 20 hours a week off-campus.
 - **How do I apply for off-campus employment?** If you meet all the requirements for off-campus employment due to economic hardship, make an appointment with your international advisor immediately to start the application process.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) FAQs

- **Am I eligible to apply for CPT?** If you are an F-1 visa student who has been enrolled in school for one academic year and the employment you are seeking is an integral part of an established curriculum then you are eligible to apply for CPT.
- **Am I eligible to apply for CPT if I am an ELAP student?** No, students enrolled in ELAP are not eligible to apply for CPT.
- **How many hours a week can I participate in CPT?** F-1 students are eligible for part-time and full-time CPT. It is important to note that every month you participate in full-time CPT it eliminates a month of OPT you are eligible to work, but participation in part-time CPT does not affect future eligibility for CPT.
- **How do I apply for CPT?** To apply for CPT, please refer to our CPT Student Checklist.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) FAQs

- **Am I eligible to apply for OPT?** If you have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one academic year in a SEVIS-approved college, university, conservatory, or seminary you are eligible for optional practical training (OPT), which is defined generally as temporary employment directly related to the student's field of study, for purposes of gaining practical experience.
- **Am I eligible to apply for OPT if I am an ELAP student?** No, students enrolled in ELAP are not eligible to apply for OPT.
- **How many months of OPT am I eligible for?** You are eligible for 12 months of OPT for every education level you complete (i.e. 12 months of OPT after you graduate with your undergraduate

degree and 12 months of OPT after you graduate with your graduate degree) unless you participated in full-time CPT in which case your OPT eligibility will be less.

- **How do I apply for OPT?** To apply for OPT, please refer to our OPT Student Checklist.