

Office of International Student and Scholar Services

The Office of International Student and Scholar services (OISSS) provides F-1 and J-1 visa status students, scholars and their dependents general information related to their immigration status including but not limited to guidance on how to apply for a visa, changing visa status in the U.S., maintaining lawful immigration status, transferring between schools, and employment authorization matters. Other requirements, benefits, and deadlines apply to F-1 and J-1 students and scholars in addition to the general information below. Students should consult the OISSS for more details.

Maintaining F-1 and J-1 Status

The U.S. federal regulations require F-1 and J-1 visa status students to maintain full-time enrollment in each spring and fall semester. Summer enrollment is optional unless it is the student's first semester at UST. Students beginning in a summer session must enroll for a minimum of six credit hours in the summer sessions. No more than one online course or three credit hours can be counted towards their enrollment minimum each semester. A student may take less than a full-time course load in their final semester or for other reasons permitted by the federal regulations.

Students must obtain the OISSS's permission before dropping below a full-time course load, changing degree programs, or withdrawing from the University. International students are also responsible to maintain valid documents such as passport and I-20 or DS-2019 at all times. If students cannot complete their program by the program end date on their I-20/DS-2019, students must obtain a program extension as soon as possible and no later than the end date. The OISSS reserves the exclusive authority in adjudicating such requests. Failure to obtain the required authorizations in a timely manner will result in termination of the student's lawful immigration status.

Employment

On-Campus

F-1 and J-1 students are eligible to work on-campus for up to 20 hours/week during spring and fall semesters. More than 20 hours/week is permissible during official school breaks. J-1 students must obtain authorization from the OISSS before starting the employment.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is temporary employment for F-1 students that is directly related to his or her major area of study and is an integral part of the established curriculum. The employment must be a degree requirement or bearing academic credit(s) towards an internship/clinical/field study/practicum or similar course that requires practical training.

In order to be eligible for CPT, a student must:

- Have maintained F-1 status
- Have enrolled full-time for one academic year. If the program requires immediate participation, there are exceptions for some graduate students.
- Meet the academic criteria for the course requiring practical training as determined by academic policies such as academic level requirement and prerequisites for an internship course.

- Obtain an employment/training offer directly related to the field of study that meets the practical training course requirements.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) grants an eligible F-1 student an opportunity to work full-time for twelve consecutive months in the U.S. in a field that is related to their degree program at each degree level.

In order to be eligible for OPT, a student must:

- Have maintained F-1 status
- Have enrolled full-time for one academic year (including one spring semester and one fall semester)
- Have graduated or be eligible for graduation in the current semester.
- Have not already participated in post-completion OPT or exceeded 12 months of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) at the current degree level.

Health Insurance Requirement

All F-1 international students are required to enroll in the University's international student health insurance plan unless they already have health insurance that meets the waiver requirements. All J-1 exchange students and accompanying J-2 dependents are required to maintain adequate health and accident insurance coverage during their exchange program in the U.S. as mandated by federal regulations.