

# CPT vs. OPT

Which one should I apply for in order to work off campus?

## Differences

- The application is free
- Your International Advisor approves your application not USCIS. Processing time is 5 minutes and not 3 months
- You have unlimited CPT time but if you work 1 year under Full-time CPT it will cancel out your 12 months of OPT.
- You must have a job offer first before applying for CPT
- You can only use CPT while you are still a student.
- Employment is either for course credit OR it's required for your major.

## Similarities

- Allow you to work off campus in the area of your major
- Both require you to meet with your international advisor
- You must be in F-1 visa status for one full academic year before applying
- Both need a recommendation from a professor or academic advisor/Dept chair
- Both can be used part-time during the school year and full-time on breaks

**CPT**  
Curricular  
Practical  
Training

**OPT**  
Optional  
Practical  
Training

## Differences

- The application fee is \$410.00
- Application is mailed in to USCIS and takes 3 months for the government to approve
- You only get 12 months of OPT time
- You don't have to have a job offer to apply
- While on OPT, if you still have not found a job you have 90 days to look for employment.
- You can use OPT while you are still a student or after graduation as long as you apply before the 60 day grace period ends.
- Most students save their OPT time for after graduation if they want to work in the US

The 60 day grace period is the time you are allowed to stay in the U.S. after your program end date on your I-20

STEM majors can apply for an additional 2 years of OPT time before their 12 months of OPT expires