International Student Services
INTERNATIONAL DIVISION
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

CPT versus OPT
F-1 Practical Training Authorization Comparison Chart

Revised: 2/5/2025

	Curricular Practical Training (CPT)	Optional Practical Training (OPT)
Eligibility	1. Must have been enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year. 2. Must currently be in valid F-1 status. 3. Degree-seeking students only.	1. Must have been enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year. 2. Must currently be in valid F-1 status. 3. Degree-seeking students only.
Types	1. Required by your program: UW–Madison Guide requirement for all students in your program. 2. Optional or elective of your degree program: integral part of the established curriculum. Course enrollment required.	1. Pre-completion: authorization to begin and end before you complete your degree. 2. Post-completion: authorization to begin after you complete your degree.
Enrollment Requirement	Full-time enrollment is required each fall and spring semester. In most cases, specific course enrollment is required during the semester that you request CPT authorization.	Full-time enrollment is required each fall and spring semester for pre-OPT. No specific course enrollment requirement for OPT authorization.
Training Position Offer	Offer required. Position must be directly related to your major listed on your I-20.	Offer not required. Position must be directly related to your major listed on your I-20.
Part-time (20 hr/wk or less) Full-time (over 20 hr/wk)	Allowed during any semester, as long as you continue to be enrolled full-time during each fall and spring semester. You must prioritize your studies!	Pre-completion: typically part-time, unless you're requesting summer pre-OPT Post-completion: must be full-time
Application Fee	$0	$470 per application
Authorization Granted By	International Student Services (ISS) Allow up to 15 business days for processing	U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) Allow 3-5 months for processing
Proof of Authorization	New I-20 with authorization dates, location, and employer on page 2.	Employment Authorization Document (EAD card)
Effect on Other Training Authorizations	If you accumulate 365+ days of full-time CPT, you are not eligible for post-completion OPT at the same degree level.	Any pre-completion OPT used is subtracted from your post-completion OPT authorization.
Time Limits	You may be authorized multiple times per degree level.	12 months per degree level as long as you move up in degree levels.

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