

Overview of F-1 Student Employment Options

Employment is considered to be the rendering of services for compensation, financial or other (any type of reimbursement including transportation, housing, books, etc.). For students in F-1 immigration status, employment is a “benefit” for which the student must qualify and where certain rules and restrictions apply. Working in the United States without proper authorization (working off-campus without prior written approval, working on-campus for more hours than permitted, etc.) is considered to be a serious violation of the F-1 status which may result in deportation. All students should consult with the Office of International Student Services (OISS) if they are considering any type of employment in the United States. Included below are some general guidelines regarding the five types of employment benefits available to students in the F-1 immigration status. Additional information about these employment benefits can be obtained from the OISS website and through the special Information Sessions which are offered by the OISS each semester.

On-campus Employment:

- Includes Teaching/Research/Graduate Assistantships, Adjunct Faculty positions, as well as employment done in other offices at Regent University where a stipend/paycheck will be issued by the University. (Does not include employment done at CBN or on the Regent campus with outside companies that issue their own paychecks and do not have a contractual agreement with the University. Always check with OISS if you are not sure what jobs are considered “on-campus employment”.)
- Must maintain full-time enrollment during the fall and spring semesters.
- No prior written approval is needed from the Office of International Student Services (OISS) if the student has maintained lawful F-1 immigration status, is still working toward his/her degree, plans to enroll in the following term, and is in possession of a valid I-20.
- Upon initial entry into the U.S., F-1 students who are just beginning their academic programs can begin on-campus employment no more than 30 days prior to the actual start of classes and must first register their immigration documents with the OISS.
- Restricted to no more than 20 hours/week total while school is in session (during the fall and spring semesters).
- Working more than 20 hours/week is permitted only during vacation periods, such as summer.
- Once a student graduates/completes all degree requirements, he/she can no longer work at Regent under the “On-campus Employment” benefit. He/she will need to apply for post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) and will need an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) in order to work at Regent as a regular employee. (See OPT section below.)

Optional Practical Training (OPT):

- Must be enrolled full-time and in lawful F-1 status for at least one full academic year in order to qualify.
- No job offer is needed to apply, but the application must be submitted to USCIS within 60 days after the student’s graduation/program completion date.
- Can apply for up to twelve months for each higher degree level that is pursued in the U.S., and can apply for any number of months at one time (For example: 2 months one summer and 10 months after graduation).
- Can apply for pre-completion or post-completion OPT, which can be used before or after the completion of the degree, but must maintain full-time enrollment during pre-completion OPT.

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- The employment must be directly related to the student's major field of study.
- Requires prior written approval in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued from USCIS (United States Citizenship & Immigration Services).
- Two-step application process done by the OISS and the USCIS.
- Costs \$340 and takes approximately 2-3 months for the USCIS to process.
- Students must first attend an OISS Information Session on OPT before they can apply. Students must attend a session in the same semester they plan to submit their OPT application.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT):

- Must be in lawful F-1 status for at least one full academic year to qualify unless required by the academic program to begin earlier.
- Must maintain full-time enrollment while engaged in CPT.
- Requires prior written authorization from the OISS.
- Employer's written offer is required before the application can be processed.
- The internship/employment experience must be an "integral part" of a student's academic curriculum to qualify for CPT (see CPT handout for details).
- 12 months of full-time CPT authorization eliminates one's eligibility for any OPT at all.
- CPT applications are processed by the OISS in approximately 1-2 weeks with no fee involved.
- Students must first attend an OISS Information Session on CPT before they can apply.

Severe Economic Hardship (SEH):

- Must be in lawful F-1 status for at least one full academic year to qualify.
- Must provide proof of extraordinary circumstances with a detailed explanation and documentation.
- Also requires an explanation of why other employment options are insufficient.
- Must maintain full-time enrollment while engaged in this type of employment.
- Granted in 12 month increments.
- Limited to no more than 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters.
- This employment does not have to be related to the student's major field of study.
- Does not affect OPT eligibility.
- Two-step application process done by the OISS and the USCIS.
- Costs \$340 and takes approximately 2-3 months for the USCIS to process.
- Students must first make an appointment with the OISS before applying for SEH.

Employment/Internship with an International Organization:

- Can apply at anytime after becoming an F-1 student.
- Can only be used for internships with special international organizations, such as the United Nations, World Health Organization, etc. (a list of qualifying organizations is available in the OISS).
- Must maintain full-time enrollment while engaged in this type of employment.
- Prior written authorization is required in the form of an EAD from USCIS.
- This employment can be full-time or part-time.
- Employer's written offer is required before the application can be processed.
- This employment does not have to be related to the student's major field of study.
- Does not affect OPT eligibility.
- Two-step application process done by the OISS and the USCIS.
- Costs \$340 and takes approximately 2-3 months for the USCIS to process.
- Students must first make an appointment with the OISS before applying for this type of employment authorization.

Special Note:

Students in F-1 status are not permitted to engage in "self-employment" of any kind, and F-2 dependents are strictly prohibited from working in the United States.