Employment

There are limited opportunities for F-1 students to work while studying. Please review the information below and request employment permission as outlined.

On-Campus Employment [1]

To be eligible for on-campus employment, you must be enrolled in a full course of study and remain enrolled full-time. Students may work “on campus” up to 20 hours per week (each week) when school is in session and full-time (more than 20 hours a week) during holiday and vacation periods. A new F-1 student who has been issued an initial form I-20 may work up to, but no more, than 30 days prior to the commencement of classes. For more information, click here [1].

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) [2]

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is an employment option available to F-1 students when the practical training employment is considered to be an integral part of the curriculum or academic program. At Yale, the use of CPT is only available in the two circumstances listed below:

- The employment (usually an internship or practicum) is a degree requirement of all students in the program. Each school and/or degree program at Yale has different requirements that will affect your eligibility for CPT. Please check with your school or OISS.
- You will receive academic credit for your proposed CPT employment. The course must be listed in your school bulletin, be specifically designed to award academic credit for an employment experience, and be a degree requirement for all students in your program. PhD students in dissertation status may be eligible for CPT if the training experience is an integral component of the dissertation.

For more information, click here [2].

Optional Practical Training (OPT) [3]

Optional Practical Training (OPT) provides an opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to a practical work experience. Most students are eligible for a total of 12 months of OPT at each degree level. Students with degrees in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) may be eligible for a 24-month extension of OPT [4]. You do not need to have a job offer before applying for OPT. To be eligible for OPT, you must:

- be enrolled for at least one full academic year,
- be physically present in the U.S.,
- be maintaining lawful status at the time of the application, and
- intend to work or volunteer in a professional development opportunity directly related to your major field of study.

For more information, click here [5].


This F-1 employment benefit allows full-time enrolled F-1 students in good academic standing to work for recognized international organizations, within the meaning of the International Organization Immunities Act [59 Stat. 669]. A student is eligible as soon as they is in F-1 status – there is no waiting period. The work does not have
to be related to a student’s course of study. Time approved by USCIS to work for an International Organization will not be deducted from your 12 month period of Optional Practical Training. The employment must be for an internship with a recognized international organization [7]. It must be within the scope of the organization’s sponsorship and may be up to 20 hours per week when school is in session or full-time during periods of recess. For more information, click here [6].

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**Economic Hardship Employment**

In some instances, a student who is able to prove severe economic hardship caused by circumstances beyond their control, which arose after obtaining the F-1 students status, may be eligible for permission to work off-campus. Students must have been in student status for one full academic year, and must be able to document the circumstances causing the economic need. If authorized, employment is limited to no more than 20 hours per week when school is in session and full-time during the break or vacation periods. Applications must be endorsed by OISS and submitted to USCIS for approval. This application may take up to 90 days to process. See an OISS adviser for more information.

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**Volunteering**

According to the Code of Federal Regulations 8 CFR 274 (a) (f) the term employee means an individual who provides services or labor for wages or other types of remuneration. Therefore, employment is work performed or services provided with the expectation that there will be compensation, either financial or other. “Volunteer work” on the other hand refers to philanthropic activity without financial gain. Students should not accept a volunteer opportunity without first checking with OISS. In many cases volunteering will violate U.S. labor laws and potentially be seen as a violation of F or J immigration status.

The most important employment issue that you always need to keep in mind is the issue of legal (or “authorized”) versus illegal (or “unauthorized”) employment. You must always make sure that any employment you plan to engage in is legal employment. Any unauthorized (i.e. illegal) employment - even for one day - even if you did not know it was illegal - poses a grave threat to your ability to remain in or return to the United States. You must always make sure that you have the necessary employment authorization before you begin work. Starting work without prior authorization even if you receive authorization later constitutes illegal employment. If you have questions, always consult with an OISS adviser [8] before beginning any employment. This is the only way to be sure that you won’t engage in illegal employment, with all of its adverse consequences for your future in the United States.

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**Source URL:** https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/employment

**Links:**
[1] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/employment/f-1-on-campus-employment
[3] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/employment/f-1-on-campus-employment
[7] https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=7f57e0e9c13513714a2d5024800f59b4&mc=true&node=se8.1.316_120&rgn=div8
[8] https://oiss.yale.edu/about/contact-oiss