

Types of employment allowed during pre- and post- completion OPT

All OPT employment, including post-completion OPT, must be in a job that is related to your degree program.

This employment may include the following (does not apply to students on a STEM EXTENSION):

Paid employment

- Students authorized for post-completion OPT may work part time (at least 20 hours per week) or full time.

Multiple employers

- Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student's degree program. Employment during pre-completion OPT cannot exceed the allowed per week cumulative hours.

Short-term multiple employers (performing artists)

- Students who are musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing a list of all gigs.

Work for hire

- Work for hire means that an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. It is sometimes called "1099 employment" because people who "work for hire" receive Internal Revenue Service Form 1099-MISC – which shows how much money was earned for a particular year – from the contracting company. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

Self-employed business owner

- Students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must work full time. The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student's degree program.

Employment through an agency

- Students on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

Unpaid employment

- Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week for students on post-completion OPT. These students must be able to provide evidence from the employer that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.