

BOSTON ARCHITECTURAL COLLEGE

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

Employment Guide for F-I Students

Types of employment available to F-I international students.

On-campus vs. off campus

On-campus employment is one of the immigration benefits of F-I students. Students may work on campus up to 20 hours per week when school is in session and over 20 hours per week during breaks and vacations, as long as they are planning to enroll full time next semester. *Full time enrolment of undergraduate students is 12 credits/semester; for graduate students, – 9 credits.*

Students do not need to apply for work authorization with USCIS to be able to work on campus; however, they must consult with the International Student Advisor if the job is eligible for on-campus employment. On-campus job opportunities are competitive. Please inquire with the relevant department regarding job requirements and application deadlines.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT is one of the benefits of the F-I non-immigrant status that allows students to engage in practical training in a field directly related to their program of study while earning academic credits. The BAC's curriculum includes a mandatory practice component for most degree programs. Hence, students may participate in CPT as long as they are working to fulfill practice curriculum requirements (practice hours and skill level) necessary to graduate. Undergraduate students may apply for CPT after they have been maintaining valid F-I status for one academic year.

Graduate students are eligible for CPT in their 1st academic year if they transferred in a studio or 12 academic credits. In these cases, immediate participation in CPT is required for timely completion of the degree program.

CPT employment is approved by the Practice Department and is authorized by the school DSO in SEVIS. CPT employment is date and employer specific, which means that students may only work for the approved employer until the end date specified on the second page of the form I-20. If the student decides to change jobs, or continue working past the CPT end date in the following semester, they need to go through the CPT approval process again by submitting the CPT request form along with an updated employment letter. Please note that CPT requests are processed and approved at the BAC. You do not need an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to engage in CPT employment. CPT endorsed form I-20 serves as the EAD.

CPT employment may be approved for part-time or full time opportunities. However, if a student is authorized for part-time CPT employment, then they cannot work over 20 hours per week. Doing so will be a violation of valid F-I status.

Compensation is not a factor in approving CPT requests. All practical training requires CPT approval, including unpaid internships.

Post-Completion OPT (Optional Practical Training)

Post-Completion OPT is another immigration benefit of F-I students. Upon completion of the academic program BAC students may apply for practical training directly related to their field of study.

Post-Completion OPT is a 12-months extension of the F-I status. Graduates of B. Arch, M. Arch, BLA, and MLA graduates are eligible to apply for 24-months STEM OPT extension at the end of post-completion OPT period.

F-I students are eligible for 12 months post-completion OPT per academic level, i.e. Bachelor's or Master's. Thus, if a student was approved and used a part of or the entire 12 months of OPT at Bachelor's level, they are only eligible to apply for another 12 months of OPT at Master's level.

Another eligibility criteria for post-completion OPT is the amount of full-time CPT a student was approved for while enrolled in their academic program. F-I students may not exceed a total of 364 days of full time CPT to be eligible for Post-Completion OPT.

Unlike CPT, OPT requires USCIS adjudication and issuance of Employment Authorization Document (EAD). If you are interested in applying for post-completion OPT, you need to schedule a meeting with the ISA in the beginning of your last semester to review your eligibility and request post-completion OPT recommendation in SEVIS.

Volunteering:

Volunteering is a rewarding experience and a great way to engage with your neighborhood and community and meet new friends. F-I students may engage in volunteering, however, it is important to keep in mind that unpaid work could still be considered employment for F-I students.

A volunteer is defined as follows by the Department of Labor: *"An individual who performs hours of service for a public agency for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered"*. Volunteering services could only be performed for a non-profit organization for public service. Examples of volunteering include donating your time to work in a soup kitchen, or another type of free meal program, becoming a part of a volunteer program in a hospital, giving your time to mosque, church, synagogue or another religious entity. Any work (paid or unpaid) for a for-profit organization is considered employment. Any employment F-I students engage in must be authorized. Before accepting an offer of

employment, you must consult with the International Student Advisor.

Social Security Number

Social Security Number (SSN) is a form of identification in the U.S. It is used to report earnings to the government and subsequently to file state and federal taxes. SSN is not authorization to work in the U.S.

SSN is issued to non-residents authorized to work. Once a student has secured an on-campus job offer, or an I-20 endorsed for CPT or OPT by the International Student Advisor, they are then eligible to apply for SSN up to 30 days before the start date of employment. To obtain a SSN, the student must apply with the local Social Security Administration Office.

F-1 status limitations

F-1 (Academic Student) status is granted for pursuing a full-time program of study at an approved institution. As such, it is important to remember that the purpose of an F-1 student being in the U.S. is to study full time. Immigration benefits of F-1 students such as practical training and on-campus employment are always conditional upon full time enrollment and academic standing.

Cultural differences

Job seekers have an array of strategies and resources they could employ while looking for a job. It is important to know, however, that employers in the U.S. may not consider certain details on a resume, such as date of birth or marital status to be professional. The BAC students have access to comprehensive resources when it comes to guidance on resume, portfolio and cover letter writing and formatting from the Practice Department, Learning Resource Center and the International Student Advisor.

Benefits, rights and responsibilities of all employees

International students employed under CPT/OPT provision of immigration regulations are viewed as

regular employees by the relevant state and federal regulatory agencies, hence, F-1 students are expected to file federal and state tax returns during tax season (Jan 31 – Apr 15). That also means that international students lawfully employed in the U.S. are subjected to the U.S. labor laws such as the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Massachusetts employers may also be required to provide paid sick leave to international student employees under Earned Sick Time law.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 protects disabled employees from discrimination in employment, hiring, transportation and covers access to public facilities, and services and telecommunications. Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation to all qualified employees with known disabilities. The BAC does not condone or tolerate discrimination toward disabled students.

The employer may or may not offer a benefits package to international student employees. However, benefits may include as much as full benefits accrued on an equal basis with other employees in similar positions. Many employers provide some vacation and personal time off. Other benefits such as group life insurance, medical insurance, profit sharing, and bonuses may or may not be available, depending on company policy. Generally, international students are paid a wage comparable to other employees with similar duties. Benefits and compensation package may not be determined by student's visa status.

Resources:

International Student Services
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