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# Employment Authorization for F-1 & J-1 Students: An Overview



# Presentation Outline

- ❖ **Employment vs. Volunteering**
- ❖ **On and Off-Campus Employment**
  - **J-1 students**
    - *Academic Training*
- ❖ **On and Off-Campus Employment**
  - **F-1 Students**
    - *Curricular Practical Training*
    - *Optional Practical Training*
      - Pre-Completion OPT
      - Post-Completion OPT
      - STEM Extension
      - Cap-Gap Extension



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# Employment vs. Volunteering



# What Is Employment?

## Do you need authorization to work off-campus?

Department of Homeland Security defines an employee as "An individual who provides services or labor for an employer for wages or other remuneration". Remuneration can include housing, food, gifts, etc.

**Any off-campus employment for F-1 or J-1 students must be authorized!**

8 CFR 214.1(e): "A nonimmigrant who is permitted to engage in employment may engage only in such employment as has been authorized. Any unauthorized employment by a nonimmigrant constitutes a failure to maintain status..."

# When Is Authorization Required:

## Volunteering/Internship?

**Volunteering is NOT simply working without getting paid! It is much more complex!**

To be considered volunteering, the work performed by the individual must meet the following criteria:

- No compensation or expectation of compensation
- The volunteer cannot displace a genuine employee, and the services provided by the volunteer should not be the same services for which he or she was previously paid and/or expects to be hired and paid for in the future
- Services are performed for a non-profit organization for public service, religious or humanitarian objective, and
- Employees may not volunteer services to **for-profit** private sector employers.

For more information, see [Volunteering - Office of International Education - Division of Enrollment Services - Carnegie Mellon University \(cmu.edu\)](#)

# CPDC: Why does this matter from a Professional Perspective?

- **Experience** on a resume implies employment. If the information you have included in an **experience** section is not in fact employment, then you should rename that section to more accurately reflect the nature of the entry.
- Experiences on a resume should not be misrepresented.
- Common additional sections include Activities, Volunteer Work, Extracurricular Experience, and Additional Experience.



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# J-1 Students: On and Off-Campus Employment Authorization

**Important! If CMU did NOT issue your DS-2019 Document, contact your J Program Sponsor for information about employment authorization!**

# On-Campus

## Employment for J-1 Students

- The Office of International Education (OIE) is required to document on-campus student employment for J-1 students in the SEVIS system
- Therefore, if CMU is your J-1 sponsor and you are working on-campus, visit our website and fill out the [J-1 On-Campus Employment Form](#)
- On-Campus is defined as working for CMU or for one of CMU vendors (food service), and can only be 20 hours or less during an academic term (i.e. fall/spring)

J-1





# Off-Campus: Academic Training

J-1

## Employment for J-1 Students

### What is Academic Training (AT) and who is eligible?

- AT is authorization for work, training, or experience related to a student's field of study
- You must have a job/training offer at the time of application.
- Employment/training takes place with the specific employer(s) noted on the AT authorization
- AT is available both before and after completion of your degree program
- Authorization must be processed **before** your official academic program completion date
- Post-completion AT must begin within the first 30 days after program completion date and must be for a paid position

The image shows a sample of the Carnegie Mellon University Academic Training (AT) Form. The form is titled "Academic Training (AT) Form - MUST BE FORM FILLABLE!" and is issued by the Office of International Education. It contains various fields for student information, including name, date of birth, and current address. It also includes sections for the training program, such as the name of the training supervisor, the start and end dates, and the number of hours per week. The form is designed to be filled out by the student and submitted to the university for processing.

# Off-Campus: Academic Training

J-1

## Employment for J-1 Students

### Length of Academic Training (AT)

- For most students: 18 months total (whether before or after completion of studies)
- The total employment/training period may not exceed the amount of time spent in full course of study

E.g., a Master's student who completed a program in 12 months, is only eligible for 12 months of academic training

- PhD students are eligible for 36 months of AT

The image shows a sample of the Carnegie Mellon University Academic Training (AT) Form. The form is titled "Academic Training (AT) Form - MUST BE FORM FILLABLE!" and is issued by the Office of International Education. It contains various fields for the student to complete, including: "STUDENT AT APPLICANT COMPLETE BELOW:", "List Academic Department:", "Suriname/Family Name:", "Date of Birth:", "Dates of Activity/Employment:", "Current US Address:", "AT Start Date:", "Full or Part Time:", "Check one: The work [ ] WILL or [ ] WILL NOT directly relate to my field of study/degree program.", "Have you applied for AT before? [ ] YES [ ] NO", "ACADEMIC ADVISORY OF ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT PROFESSOR COMPLETE BELOW:", "Name of student:", "Is a CMU J-1 student majoring in:", "and/or was last enrolled:", "They are expected to complete all requirements for the program by:", "1. DESCRIPTION OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM:", "Name of Training Supervisor/Employer:", "Dates of Activity/Employment:", "Training Supervisor/Employer Address:", "Start Date:", "End Date:", "Field of study:", "Student's job title:", "Number of hours a week:", "Hours (per week) at Second Site:", "Updated 7/2018".

# Off-Campus: Academic Training

J-1

## Employment for J-1 Students

### Application process for Academic Training:

- Job offer letter required!
- Academic advisor recommendation
- Authorization is issued by OIE

Must be processed before the end date on DS-2019 or before the program completion, whichever comes first!

- No fee

### For more information about Academic Training:

Go to [OIE web site](https://oie.cmu.edu)

The image shows a sample of the Academic Training (AT) Form from Carnegie Mellon University's Office of International Education. The form is titled "Academic Training (AT) Form - MUST BE FORM FILLABLE!" and includes instructions for the student to complete. It contains various fields for personal information, academic details, and employment information. The form is partially filled out with example data, including a student's name, date of birth, and current address. It also includes a section for the student to describe the training program and the employer. The form is dated 2018.

# CPDC: J-1 Student Employment

- **On-Campus employment** should be listed on your resume, particularly if you are working as a Course Assistant, Teaching Assistant, or Research Assistant.
- List **title** correctly—confirm with your supervisor.
- Once **Academic Training (AT)** has been obtained and the date has started, then off-campus employment can be listed on resume once opportunity has started.



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# F-1 Students: On and Off-Campus Employment Authorization

# On-Campus

F-1

- NO special authorization is necessary **(on-campus employment only)**
- On-Campus is defined as working for CMU or for one of CMU (food service) vendors, and can only be 20 hours or less during an academic term (i.e. fall/spring)
- IMPORTANT: On-campus work authorization ends on current I-20 program end date or when program is completed, whichever comes first!



# CPDC: F-1 On-Campus Employment

- **On-campus employment** can be listed on a resume.
- Be accurate with **titles** and be sure it is listed in the appropriate **section** (Professional Experience, Research Experience, etc).
- Do not list it on resume until experience **has started**.
  - Note: **Part-time** has different meanings:
    - Immigration=20 hours or less
    - Employers=definition varies

# Off-Campus Employment Authorization:

F-1

- **F-1 Students**
  - Curricular Practical Training
  - Optional Practical Training
    - Pre-Completion OPT
    - Post- Completion OPT
    - STEM Extension OPT
    - Cap-Gap Extension



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# Curricular Practical Training (CPT)



# Off-Campus:

## CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

F-1

### What is CPT and Who is Eligible?

- Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is defined as authorization for practical training which is “an integral part of an established curriculum”
- Only available prior to completion of degree program (no CPT in last semester!)
- To be eligible:
  - Must have been a full-time student in the U.S. for one academic year (two full semesters); exception: grad students whose program requires internship/practicum in 1<sup>st</sup> year
  - Must have a job offer at the time of application
  - Must meet academic requirements
- No immigration limit on how much CPT you can have (but 12 months or more of full-time CPT will make you ineligible for OPT – Optional Practical Training)

# Off-Campus: CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

F-1

## Types of CPT:

- Required CPT: academic program requires practical work experience in the field of study to graduate
- Optional CPT: the practical work experience is for credit and directly related to your field of study. You must be enrolled in an internship/practicum course and receive academic credit that goes towards your degree requirements
- Part-time CPT: 20 hours or less/week
- Full-time CPT: more than 20 hours/week.

**\*\*Use of full-time CPT for one year or more eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training. Use of part-time CPT does not affect eligibility for Optional Practical Training\*\***

# Off-Campus: CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

F-1

## Application Process for CPT:

- Job offer is required!
- Academic department approval
- Academic course registration
- Complete [CPT Canvas course](#)
- Authorization is issued by OIE
  - submit online form via [MyOIE Portal](#)
  - 10 business days processing time
  - New CPT I-20 is your CPT work authorization
- No fee (except tuition for internship course)

Want more information about CPT?  Go to [OIE website](#)

### Foreign Student Information

From applying and traveling to Carnegie Mellon to document procedures and employment options, this section of the website will provide you with all of the information you need during your educational journey.

[Contact OIE](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

#### [Applying to Carnegie Mellon](#)

Application information for prospective international students.

#### [Coming to Carnegie Mellon](#)

Congratulations! You've been accepted. Now what?

#### [Settling In Guide](#)

Review this guide in preparation for your arrival to CMU and the US.

#### [Maintaining Legal Status](#)

Documents you need and rules to follow in order to remain legally in the US.

#### [Employment Options](#)

Details about employment options for F-1 and J-1 students.

#### [Travel Tips & Advice](#)

Traveling in and out of the US, plus visa issues and other documents for non-immigrants.

#### [Host Family Program](#)

Connect with volunteer local host families for informal opportunities.

#### [Student Groups & Leadership](#)

Internationally-focused student groups and leadership resources.

#### [Leaving Carnegie Mellon](#)

Close to graduation? Learn about your immigration options and responsibilities.

# CPDC: CPT from Employment Perspective

## Summer internships

- You must confirm if you are **eligible** for CPT.
- Seek employment **directly related to field of study**.
- During Career Fairs, look for employers **willing to hire international students and/or sponsor work visas**.

## Not eligible for CPT?

- You can still **do something** with your summer! Research, projects, opportunities back home, OPT (if eligible), etc.

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# Optional Practical Training (OPT)



# Off-Campus: OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

F-1

## What is OPT and Who is Eligible?

- Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an off campus employment authorization for obtaining work directly related to the student's major field of study in order to gain practical experience in the field
- To be eligible:
  - Must have been a full-time student in the U.S. for one academic year (i.e. two full consecutive terms)
  - Have used less than 12 months of full-time CPT
  - Have not been previously approved for 12 months of OPT at the same degree level
- OPT is available both before and after completion of your degree program

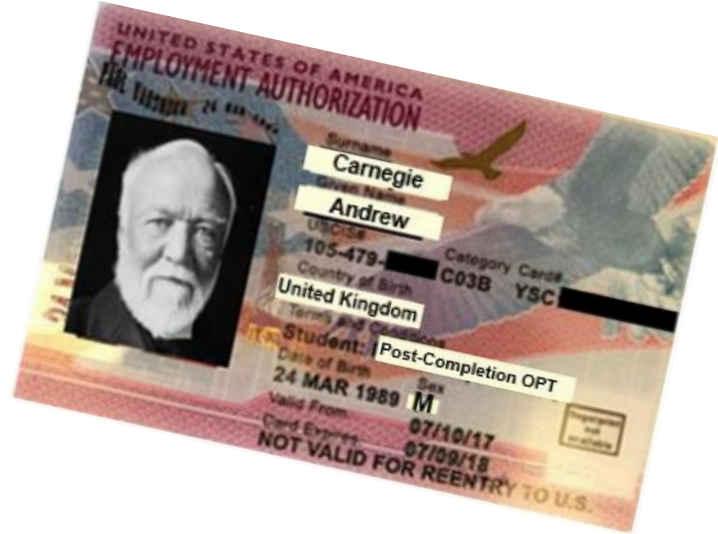
# Off-Campus: OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

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## Types of OPT

There are four types of Options Practical Training (OPT):

1. Pre-Completion OPT
2. Post-Completion OPT
  - \*Total time – 12 months; may be split between pre- and post-OPT
3. STEM Extension
  - \*Total time – 24 months
4. Cap Gap Extension
  - \*Total time – the time gap between end of post-OPT and start of H-1B status





# Off-Campus: OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

F-1

## Pre-Completion OPT

- Begins and ends BEFORE completion of major/degree requirements
- Part-Time: 20 hours per week or less; Full-Time: more than 20 hours per week
- Types:
  - During annual vacation (summer)
    - *You must intend to register full-time for the immediately following term*
    - *May be part-time or full-time*
  - While school is in session (fall & spring)
    - *Full-time registration is required during that term*
    - *May be part-time only (20 hours per week or less)*

# Off-Campus: OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

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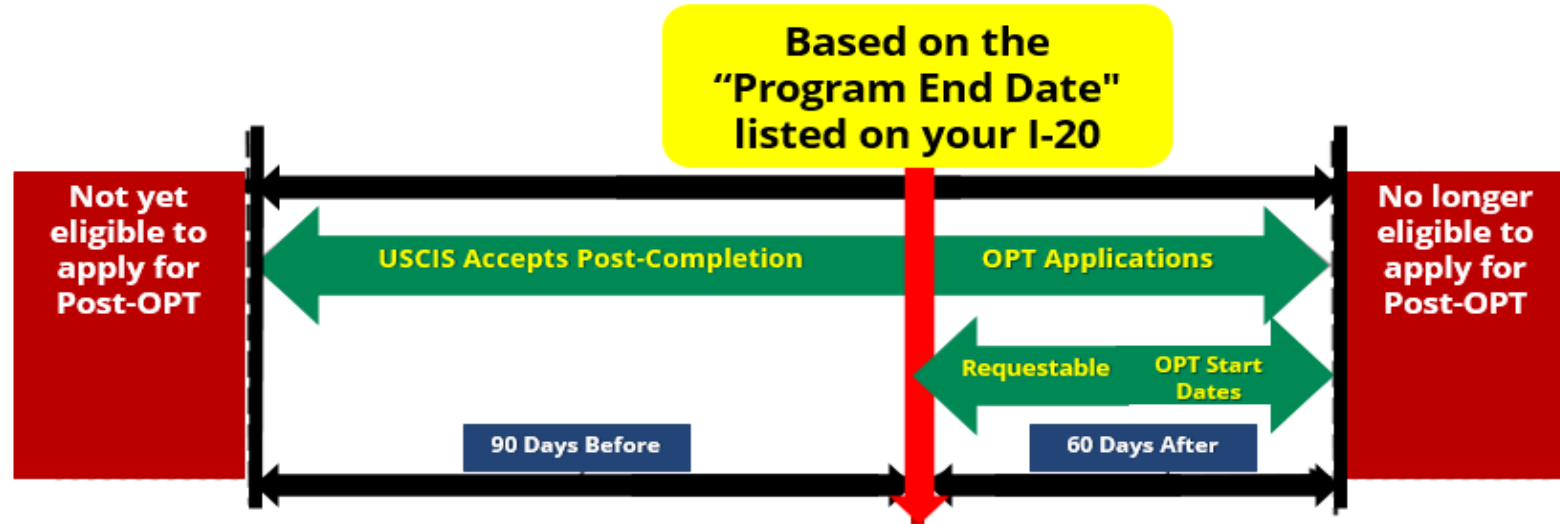
## Post-Completion OPT

- Begins and ends AFTER completion of enrollment requirements
- Apply during your final term of study (last term you are registered for required units)
- Requested Post-Completion OPT start date must be within 60 days after program completion date
- Always authorized as full-time. Must work at 20+ hours/week to maintain status
- During post-OPT, may not be unemployed for more than 90 days (cumulative).

# Off-Campus: Post-OPT

The Application Process has **IMPORTANT** Timelines!!

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# Off-Campus: OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

F-1

## Application Process for Pre- and Post-OPT:

❖ **No job offer required to apply!**

- Recommendation (new I-20) from OIE
  - Complete the [REQUIRED OPT Canvas course](#) (for Post-OPT ONLY)
  - Submit e-Form via [MyOIE Portal](#)
  - 10 business days processing time for new I-20
- Submit OPT application to USCIS
  - Cost of application (check uscis.gov for exact amount) + cost of photos & shipping (no shipping needed if filing online)
- Authorization (EAD Card) is issued by USCIS
  - USCIS processing time may take 2-5 months!

## For More Information About OPT:

- Go to [OIE website](#)

# Off-Campus: CPT & OPT Similarities

F-1

## CPT & OPT

For off-campus employment

Must complete one academic year full-time in the U.S.

Work needs to be related to major

Doesn't matter if work is paid or unpaid



# Off-Campus: CPT & OPT Differences

F-1

## CPT

Needs to count toward degree requirements

Requires employment offer to apply

Approved by: OIE in conjunction with Academic Department

Cost: Tuition and fees (paid to CMU)

Processing Time: 10 business days

Maximum: as many times as it counts towards degree (e.g., internship course)

## OPT

Does not need to count toward degree requirements

Does not require employment offer to apply

Approved by: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Cost: application fee (paid to government)

Processing Time: 2-5 months

Maximum: 12 months\*

*\*Students in STEM majors may be eligible for additional 24 month extension*

# CPDC: OPT Considerations

- Employment during OPT must be **directly related to your field of study**.
- An offer is not needed to apply for pre-opt or post-opt. So, **do not wait** until you have a job offer to apply.
- You can interview for jobs **while OPT is pending**. Clearly communicate your anticipated OPT start date during these interviews.

# CPDC: OPT Considerations Continued

- Your anticipated **OPT start date must be communicated** to employers during interview process.
- When interviewing for jobs, communicate clearly about start date—your **OPT must have started** to participate in training, employer orientations, the first day of employment, etc.
- [Employment Questions](#) on job applications—answer to the best of your ability. In order to stay in the US and work beyond OPT, you WILL need some sort of visa sponsorship.



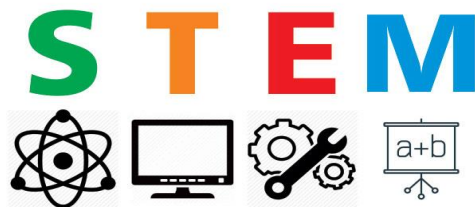
# CPDC: OPT Considerations Continued

## Career Fairs

- CMU has Career Fairs this Fall and Spring! You can participate for practice, even if you're not eligible for CPT or OPT this summer. "Group Sessions" are perfect for you to attend right now.
- It's a good idea to practice talking with employers and you can explain when/if/how you'll have work authorization.
- Good to start thinking about what industries you will work in and what positions you are qualified for.

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# STEM OPT Extension



# Off-Campus: STEM OPT Extension (STEM)

## What is STEM OPT and Who is Eligible?

- STEM OPT is a 24-month extension of Post-OPT
  - Specific STEM majors only (see government [CIP code list](#))
  - Must be employed and apply **before** post-OPT EAD expires
  - Employer must be in **E-Verify** (a government database)\*
  - Employer must complete **Form I-983** (training plan)
  - Must be **paid**, at least 20 hrs/week, and related to STEM degree; no self-employment allowed

**\* CMU is not an E-verified employer for STEM OPT purposes; you cannot have STEM OPT based on employment with CMU**

# Off-Campus: STEM OPT Extension (STEM)

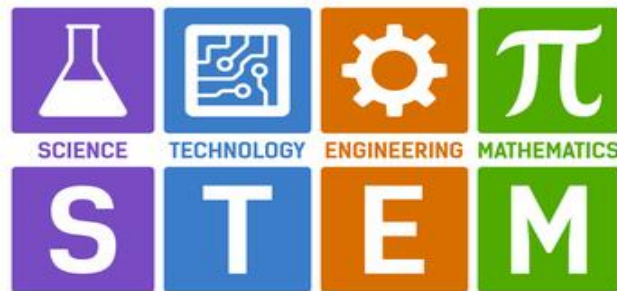
## Application Process for STEM OPT:

- Job with E-verified employer is required to apply
- I-983 Training Plan from employer is required to apply
- Recommendation (new I-20) from OIE
  - 10 business days processing time for new I-20
- Submit STEM OPT application to USCIS
  - Cost of application (check [uscis.gov](https://uscis.gov) for exact amount) + cost of photos & shipping (no shipping needed if filing online)
- Authorization (EAD Card) is issued by USCIS
  - USCIS processing times may take 2-5 months (employment may continue for up to [180 days](#) after your post-OPT ends with a pending STEM OPT application)

## For More Information About STEM OPT:

- Go to [OIE website](#)

F-1

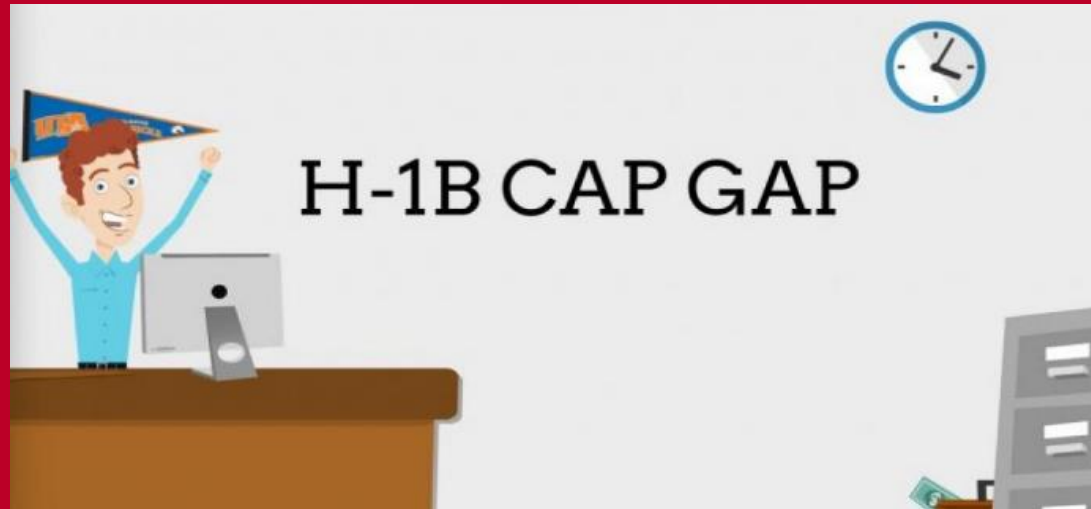


# CPDC: STEM OPT Considerations

- As CMU alumni, you have **lifetime access** to Career Services. Reach out to your Career Advisor/Consultant if you need assistance during OPT or STEM OPT.
- STEM OPT applications review the **direct relation** of your work to your degree from CMU.
- Keep your resume updated and accurate during this time.
- Continue networking!

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# Cap Gap OPT Extension



# Off-Campus: Cap Gap OPT Extension

## What is Cap Gap OPT Extension and Who is Eligible?

- Cap Gap is OPT extension based on H-1B status and intended to cover a possible gap between end of OPT and start of H-1B (October 1)
- There is a limit (“**Cap**”) of H-1Bs each year for private business jobs (*not colleges*).
- H-1Bs for industry jobs (*not colleges*) start only on October 1 of each year.
- Application for H-1B can be submitted to USCIS up to 6 months prior to start date (*April 1*).
- These date restrictions may cause a “**Gap**” in employment authorization for students on OPT. Cap Gap OPT extension covers this gap

### Eligible for Cap Gap if:

- H-1B filed by employer ***before*** expiration of OPT
- OPT end date is between April 1 and October 1
- **H-1B is filed as a “Change of Status” (COS)**

# Off-Campus: CAP GAP Extension

F-1

## Application process for Cap Gap OPT Extension:

- Cap gap extension is **automatic** (if you are eligible)
- Cap Gap I-20 issued by OIE (can be requested via the [MyOIE Portal](#))  
10 business days processing time
- No fee

**For more information about the Cap Gap OPT Extension:**

**Go to [OIE web site](#)**



# CPDC: H-1B and other Visa Considerations

- H-1B sponsorship is usually part of a verbal conversation during the hiring process. It's not as common to appear in the offer letter.
- If an employer is willing to sponsor you for an H-1B, discuss this with them. Do not engage in this conversation if you have no interest!
- There are other visa options besides the H-1B.
  - Perhaps working as long as possible on OPT or STEM OPT is best
  - Be considerate
- The professional world is small--people know each other and so managing good relationships is important.

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# Additional Information and Resources



# Social Security Number

- Social Security number (SSN) is required if you earn wages in the US
- Apply for a [Social Security Card](#) as soon as you are eligible
  - CPT – up to 30 days before start date listed on CPT I-20
  - OPT – only from start date on approved OPT EAD (can apply for SSN as part of OPT application)
- Not eligible if within two weeks of CPT or OPT end date



# Taxes

- Students are subject to all taxes, except Social Security & Medicare
- Students **MUST** file tax forms by April 15 of every calendar year.



## Office of International Education



**Cyert Hall, 1st Floor**  
**412-268-5231**  
**[www.cmu.edu/oie](http://www.cmu.edu/oie)**

## Career and Professional Development Center



**West Wing, 2nd Floor**  
**412-268-2064**  
**[www.cmu.edu/career](http://www.cmu.edu/career)**