Frequently Asked Questions about
Optional Practical Training

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

- OPT is training/employment that is directly related to an F1 student’s major area of study. It is intended to provide students with practical experience in their field of study upon completion of a degree program.

Who is eligible for OPT?

- In order to qualify for OPT, you must:
  - Be a student in F1 status.
  - Be registered full-time for at least one academic year.
  - Complete your program of study (graduate).

- You are ineligible for OPT if you:
  - Have completed one year full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) at your current level of study.
  - Have already applied and been approved for OPT after completing a different degree at your current level of study.
  - Are a Felician College exchange or ESL student

When should I apply for OPT?

- **Earliest**: Up to 90 days before your program end-date.
- **Latest**: No more than 60 days after your program end-date.
- **Recommended**: Apply at least 3 months before you plan to start working to allow for document processing.

When can I begin working?

- You can start on or after the date indicated on your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.
- You may not begin working until you receive your EAD card.
- If you receive your EAD card before the employment start-date listed on the card, you may NOT begin working until that date.

How many hours can I work on OPT?

- **Minimum**: 20 hours per week (part-time).
- **Maximum**: No maximum! You are free to work the hours required by your employer.

What type of employment is allowed for post-completion OPT?

- **PLEASE NOTE**: All OPT employment **must** be related to your major program of study.
OPT employment may include:

- **Multiple employers:** You may work for more than one employer, but ALL employment must be related to your major program of study.

- **Work for hire** (commonly referred to as the 1099 employment)
  
  → You may perform a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship.

  → You must be prepared to provide evidence to the US Government, if called upon to do so, showing the dates and duration of the contract periods, and the name and address of the contracting company.

- **Unpaid employment:**
  
  → You may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, so long as your work does not violate any labor laws (for example, it is not a position normally associated with wages).

  → You must work at least 20 hours per week, and must be able to provide to the US Government, if called upon to do so, evidence from the volunteer/internship supervisor of the hours you worked.

What happens if I’m unemployed during OPT?

- You are permitted a total of 90 days of unemployment on OPT.

- If you travel outside of the US while unemployed during OPT, the time you spend abroad counts towards your 90 days of unemployment.

- You must report all employment/unemployment to the Office of International Programs at Felician College. We will not terminate your record if you exceed your 90 days’ unemployment. We are only required to report any changes in address or program/employment in SEVIS.

What options do I have after my OPT end-date?

- Begin a new program of study.
  
  → If you begin a new program of study before your OPT end-date, you are no longer legally authorized to work off-campus. Normal work restrictions for full-time F1 students apply as soon as your new program of study begins.

- Change to a different immigration status.
  
  → If your employer wishes to sponsor you for a change of status to H1-B, it is their responsibility to file a petition on your behalf. Felician College does NOT offer H1-B petition advising services.

- Depart the United States.
  
  → If you are leaving after accruing up to or over 90 days of unemployment, you must depart the United States immediately. If you have been employed throughout your year of OPT and have accrued less than 90 days’ unemployment, you have 60 days to depart the United States after your OPT end-date. Please note that you may not continue working after your OPT end-date.