Introduction
Optional Practical Training (OPT) permits F-1 students to gain practical experience in their fields of study. One year of OPT is available per educational level. Students retain F-1 nonimmigrant status while on OPT.

There are several versions of OPT. The two kinds most used by UT Tyler students are:
- Standard Post-Completion OPT – 12 months of employment authorization after graduation
- STEM OPT Extension – Additional 24 months of authorization for students who graduated with a science, technology, engineering or math degree and who work for an employer that participates in the federal E-verify system. Application for STEM OPT occurs at the end of the initial OPT period.

Eligibility
To be eligible for post-completion OPT, you must:
- Currently be in valid F-1 status;
- Have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis at a US college or university for one full academic year;
- Be in the final semester before graduation
- Have had less than one year of full-time CPT
- File the OPT application during the designated period using an I-20 that is less than 30 days old.

Process
- Attend an OPT workshop, read the OIP website or individually consult an international student advisor.
- Pay the $50 OPT Administrative Fee through myUTTyler or to a cashier at the One-Stop Shot in the UC.
- Submit request forms to an international student advisor in person or through oip@uttyler.edu.
- Obtain an OPT I-20.
- Assemble the application packet and mail to USCIS.
- If approved, receive an Employment Authorization Card.

When to Apply
- Up to 90 days before your academic program end date.
- No later than 60 days after your academic program end date. USCIS must receive your application by this date.
- The USCIS processing time for I-765 applications is approximately 3-4 months.

Choice of Start Date
You will indicate a preferred start date on the OPT request form, which will be listed on the OPT I-20. It can be any date between your program completion date and 60 days after that date. As USCIS requires at least 90 processing days, to avoid losing days of OPT, apply early.

Unemployment Limit
F-1 students approved for post-completion OPT are limited to an aggregate of 90 days of unemployment during the whole OPT period. Students who accumulate more than 90 days may lose their F-1 status and may be refused the STEM extension or other benefits.

Acceptable Employment
In order to stop the 90-day unemployment count, work must be over 20 hours per week and directly related to academic program of study. Students and their employers are responsible for to ensure this. Types of employment allowed include:
- Unpaid employment (volunteer/unpaid internship) of over 20 hours per week
- Multiple employers
- Self-employed business owner
- Employment through an agency or consulting firm

Reporting Requirements
Federal regulations require students to report each job change and change of address within 10 days of each change. This is done by notifying oip@uttyler.edu or through the SEVP student portal. You will be given access to the portal when OPT is approved.

Travel
After OPT approval, to re-enter the U.S. you must have a valid, unexpired passport, unexpired F-1 visa, OPT card, proof of employment and OPT I-20 with travel signature on page two that is less than six months old. For more information about travel, contact an international student advisor.

The information provided is intended for general use by UT Tyler students. It is not intended as legal advice and does not cover all student responsibilities during the OPT period.