Student Guide to
CPT & OPT

What is CPT?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) allows international students with an F-1 student visa to gain work experience through internship programs directly related to their program of study.

What is OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows international students with an F-1 student visa to gain work experience after graduation for up to 12 months. You can also apply for a 24-month STEM extension if your program of study is STEM eligible (see page 2 for more details).

What is the difference between CPT and OPT?

	CPT	OPT
Eligibility to apply	International students on F-1 visa who have completed one full academic year (30 weeks of instructional time)	International students on F-1 visa who are in the last semester of their program
When to apply	After one year of study	Up to 90 days before the last day of the last semester of classes, or up to 60 days after the last day of classes
Do I need a job offer to apply?	Yes, you need an offer letter from an employer to apply for CPT	No, it is not necessary to have a job offer before applying
Who authorizes it?	Your college DSO authorizes CPT in coordination with the CCPD	USCIS authorizes OPT after your DSO's recommendation
Documents required to apply	Offer letter from employer	I-94 form, passport, visa, online OPT application (I-765 form), application to graduate, OPT endorsed I-20 from DSO
Documents obtained to work	CPT I-20 (must be authorized before employment begins)	EAD card
Eligibility for STEM extension	No	Yes, you can apply for 24-month STEM extension if your program of study is STEM eligible
Processing time	1-2 weeks	1-3 months on average

How does CPT affect OPT?

If you work full-time for 12 months with CPT, you will not be eligible for OPT. While in CPT, you can work:
- Part-time CPT: 20 hours or less per week (no limit to part-time CPT)
- Full-time CPT: more than 20 hours per week (12 months or more of full-time CPT will eliminate OPT eligibility)

Can I apply for CPT and OPT at the same time?

Yes, you can apply for both CPT and OPT at the same time if you are in the last semester of your program. However, it is advisable to apply for CPT prior to applying for OPT as the I-765 OPT application asks if any CPT has been authorized.

What is the 24-month STEM OPT extension?

If you obtained a degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) field approved by USCIS/DHS, you can apply for the 24-month STEM OPT extension in the last 90 days of your approved OPT and before the last day of your OPT.

How do I apply for CPT?
1 Check your eligibility for CPT.
2 Secure an internship from an employer and submit your offer letter to the CCPD office.
3 Report your internship using this link.
4 For more information visit our website.

How do I apply for OPT?
1 Prepare the documents required for application: I-94, passport, visa, two photographs (2 X 2), online application (including all applicable fees), application to graduate (can be found in Workday).
2 Determine your OPT start date.
3 For more information visit our website.

Do I have to enroll in a course during CPT?

Yes, CPT must be associated with a relevant course in your program. You will be required to report the day-to-day activities in the job through course assignments in Canvas. Possible CPT courses include:
- All graduate programs: GRAD590
- MS Health Informatics: HINF690
- MAE, MS Environmental, Safety & Health Management: capstone course
- Undergraduate internship courses

Is it better to finish my program quickly and apply for OPT or complete CPT while studying?

How you choose to approach the CPT/OPT process depends on your program of study and your own personal goals. If you are able to enroll in summer courses, you may choose to finish your degree quickly and apply for OPT. If you choose not to enroll in summer courses, or if your program doesn't offer them, you may prefer to apply for CPT and complete a summer internship. However, in order to apply for CPT, it is essential to secure a job offer first.

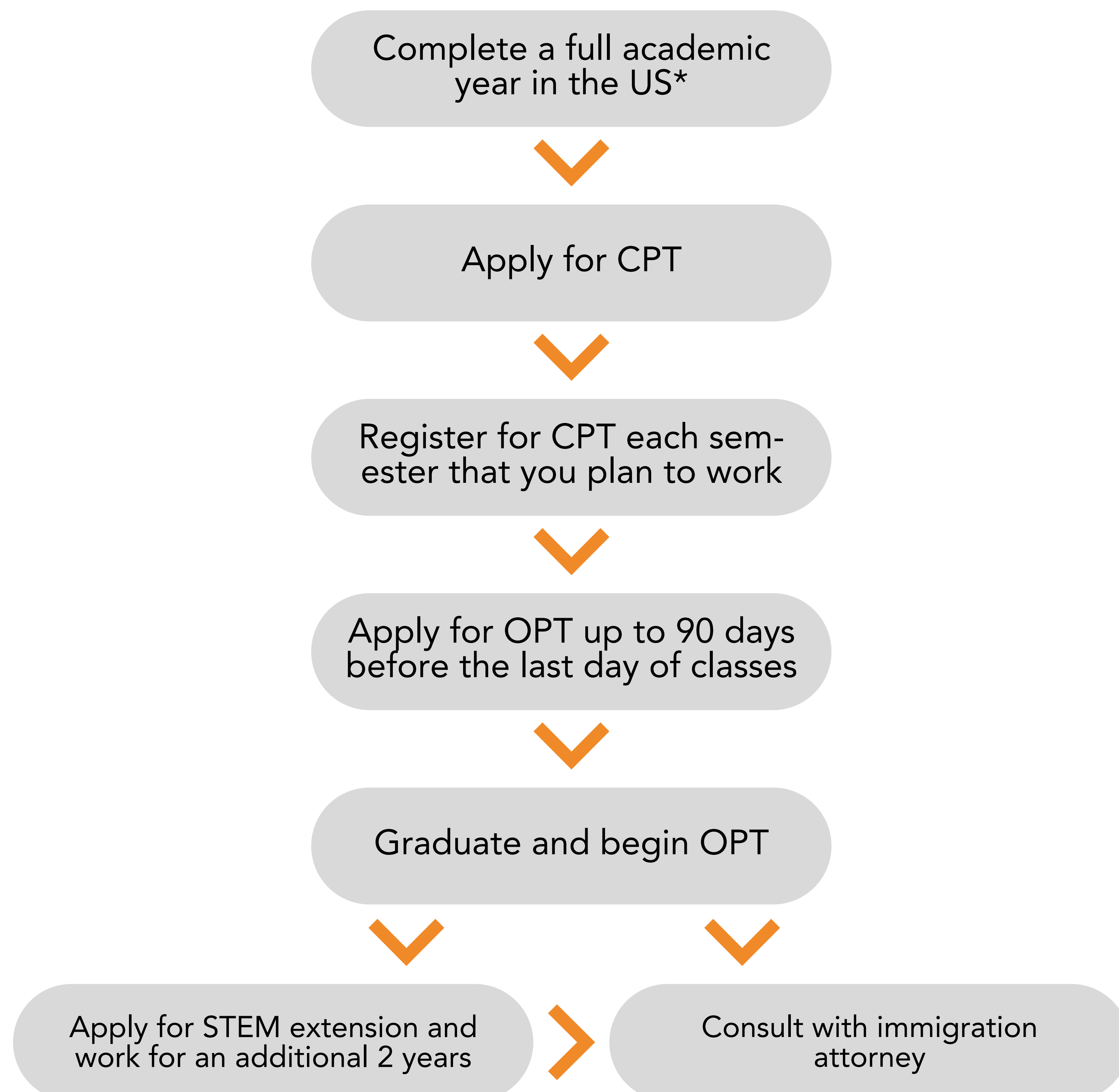## How do I apply for a Social Security Number (SSN)?

While you are not required to have a SSN prior to beginning work, employers are required to use your SSN to report your wages to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). You will need a copy of your Form I-20 to apply for a SSN. Learn more at https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10181.pdf.

CPT & OPT Timeline

Complete a full academic year in the US*

Apply for CPT

Register for CPT each semester that you plan to work

Apply for OPT up to 90 days before the last day of classes

Graduate and begin OPT

Apply for STEM extension and work for an additional 2 years

Consult with immigration attorney

Options after Graduation

Apply for OPT

Pursue higher education at UF or another university

Return to your home country within 60 days

Consult with immigration attorney and apply for change of status

*Debbie VanAtta in International Admissions can provide your CPT eligibility date.

Where can I find more information?

For more information on employment and immigration services, visit www.findlay.edu/admissions/international/immigration/.

University of Findlay
Center for Career &
Professional Development