

What qualifies as “employment” for The Department of Homeland Security?

IMPORTANT: *Always* keep records of your employment status to show you are working an average of at least 20 hours per week in a field related to the major listed on your OPT I-20.

Paid employment. You may work part time (at least 20 hours per week when on post-completion OPT) or full time (more than 20 hours per week).

Multiple employers. You may work for more than one employer.

Short-term multiple employers. If you are a performing artist, such as a musician, you may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). Maintain a list of all gigs, dates, and duration.

Work for hire. This is also commonly referred to as 1099 employment where an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. Be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of your contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

Self-employed business owner. While on OPT you may start a business and be self-employed. You must apply for and obtain the proper business license/s. We recommend you seek professional legal advice for this option.

Employment through an agency or consulting firm. Employment agencies work to match your experience, skills, and education to temporary and long-term jobs and assist you with the job application and placement.

Unpaid employment. You may work as a volunteer or unpaid intern, as long as your position does not violate any CA state or U.S. federal labor laws.