

RESPONSIBILITY KEY: ■ Student / Employee handles ■ Employer must act / sponsor ■ Both Student & Employer required ■ Milestone / Transition

<p>F-1 STUDENT STATUS</p> <p>CPT Curricular Practical Training</p> <p style="background-color: #4caf50; color: white; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Per semester / Part- or Full-time</p> <p>Work authorization integrated into the academic curriculum. Must be a required, credit-bearing internship or co-op directly tied to the student's STEM major.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed ≥ 1 full academic year on F-1 Approved by the university's DSO (Designated School Official) Job must match major field of study Using 12+ months of full-time CPT eliminates OPT eligibility <p style="background-color: #c8e6c9; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">No USCIS fee</p> <p style="background-color: #e0f2f1; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Student applies through university DSO</p>	<p>F-1 STUDENT STATUS</p> <p>OPT Optional Practical Training</p> <p style="background-color: #4caf50; color: white; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">12 months per degree level</p> <p>Post-graduation work authorization issued by USCIS as an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). No E-Verify required for employer. Student can work for any employer in their field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply up to 90 days before graduation USCIS issues EAD card (takes 90–120 days to process) Work must be directly related to STEM degree Max 90 days unemployment allowed Employer does NOT need to be E-Verify enrolled <p style="background-color: #c8e6c9; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">~\$410 I-765 filing fee (student)</p> <p style="background-color: #e0f2f1; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Student files I-765 with USCIS via DSO</p>	<p>F-1 STUDENT STATUS — KEY HIRING WINDOW</p> <p>STEM OPT STEM OPT 24-Month Extension</p> <p style="background-color: #4a148f; color: white; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">+24 months (36 months total w/ OPT)</p> <p>USCIS-authorized extension for graduates of STEM-designated programs. Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify and co-sign the I-983 Training Plan. Total OPT period can reach 36 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree on DHS STEM Designated Degree List (Landscape Arch. CIP 04.0601) Apply within last 90 days of 12-month OPT Employer must be enrolled in E-Verify (free) Employer & student jointly complete Form I-983 Training Plan Employer must report salary, duties & training goals Formal evaluation every 6 months required <p style="background-color: #c8e6c9; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">~\$1,400–\$1,700 filing fees (student)</p> <p style="background-color: #e0f2f1; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Student files I-765 Employer co-signs I-983</p>	<p>NONIMMIGRANT WORK VISA — EMPLOYER SPONSORED</p> <p>H-1B Specialty Occupation Visa</p> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">3 yrs initial · renewable to 6 yrs</p> <p>Employer petitions USCIS to sponsor the employee as a specialty occupation worker. Subject to annual cap (65,000 + 20,000 master's exemption) and weighted lottery. Landscape Architecture (accredited degree) qualifies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer registers in annual lottery (March) If selected, employer files I-129 Petition (Form I-129) Employer obtains Labor Condition Application (LCA) from DOL Start date: October 1st following selection Premium processing available (~15 business days, extra fee) H-1B is employer-specific: tied to sponsoring firm <p style="background-color: #ffcdd2; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">\$3,000–\$6,000+ employer filing fees</p> <p style="background-color: #e0f2f1; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Employer files and funds all petitions</p>	<p>IMMIGRANT VISA — EMPLOYER SPONSORED</p> <p>Green Card EB-2 / EB-3 Lawful Permanent Residence</p> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">2–5+ yrs (PERM + I-140 + I-485)</p> <p>Employer permanently sponsors the employee. Process begins with PERM Labor Certification (DOL), then I-140 Immigrant Petition (USCIS), then Adjustment of Status (I-485) when a visa number is available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PERM: Employer tests labor market (4–18 months, DOL) I-140: Employer files Immigrant Petition (USCIS) Employee files I-485 Adjustment of Status when priority date current EB-3 (bachelor's) or EB-2 (advanced degree/NIW) categories H-1B can be extended beyond 6 yrs if I-140 approved <p style="background-color: #ffcdd2; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">\$4,000–\$12,000+ (PERM + I-140 + legal)</p> <p style="background-color: #e0f2f1; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Employer sponsors PERM & I-140 · Employee files I-485</p>	<p>FINAL STEP — INDEPENDENT</p> <p>Citizenship Naturalization · Form N-400</p> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Eligible after 5 yrs as Green Card holder</p> <p>After holding Lawful Permanent Residence for 5 years, the employee independently files for naturalization with USCIS. No employer sponsorship required at this stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 years as Lawful Permanent Resident (or 3 yrs if married to U.S. citizen) Continuous residence and physical presence requirements File Form N-400 Application for Naturalization (USCIS) Pass English language and civics test Attend interview and oath ceremony Processing: typically 8–24 months after N-400 filing <p style="background-color: #ffcdd2; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">\$760 N-400 filing fee (individual)</p> <p style="background-color: #e0f2f1; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Employee files N-400 independently</p>
--	---	---	--	--	--

Disclaimer: This resource is for general educational and informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Students should work with their school's international office or Designated School Official (DSO), and employers and individuals should consult qualified immigration counsel for case-specific advice. Readers should always verify current requirements directly with official government sources, such as USCIS.gov.

APPROXIMATE TOTAL TIMELINE FROM STUDENT TO CITIZENSHIP

