

OPT FACT SHEET

Optional Practical Training

International Student & Scholar Services



DEFINING OPT

- Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an employment option available to F-1 students ***when the employment is directly related to the major area of study***. The OPT application process is facilitated through the student development office, but final authorization is processed by Immigration (USCIS). It is the ***student's responsibility*** to ensure that the application is submitted to USCIS before the completion of the student's program. **All** forms must be submitted to USCIS prior to the student's program completion date. Since you must have the authorization before you begin to work, be sure to apply well in advance, as the processing time at USCIS can take several weeks. No job offer is required to receive OPT authorization, but the student is expected to work or be actively seeking employment after the OPT EAD is issued.
- Effective on April 8, 2008 under the provisions of 8 CFR 214.2 (f)(10)(ii)(C) a 17-month extension to the OPT was approved for students in the (STEM) degrees – science, technology, engineering, or math.. http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/nces_cip_codes_rule_09252008.pdf is the DHS website for complete information on the 17-month extension list.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

- To be eligible for OPT a student must have maintained legal F-1 status for one full academic year.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Obtain a OPT application form (available online and in the student development office).
2. Employment start and end dates, your program completion dates, and obtain appropriate academic advisor's signature.
3. Submit completed OPT application documents to the DSO in student development at a **scheduled appointment time**
4. Bring with you to your appointment time the following:
 - a. Completed **OPT Application form**
 - b. Check payable to US Department of Homeland Security; Application fee: \$340 verify that this amount hasn't changed.
 - c. 2 Passport-style photos (color photo, full frontal view).
 - d. Form I-765 <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> choose the forms tab and then the Most Searched Forms section on the right side and choose I-76f5. The link for the form and the instructions are at the bottom of that page.
 - e. Copy of I-94 card (front and back)
 - f. Copy of Passport I.D. pages(s) including expiration date
 - g. Copy of **ALL PREVIOUS I-20s**
 - h. Copy of all previous Employment Authorization Documents (EAD cards)
5. The DSO will review the application with you, issue a new I-20 for OPT authorization for mailing the completed OPT application packet to Immigration (USCIS). Do not begin employment until you receive the EAD for approved OPT authorization. The EAD is a license-sized picture card that indicates the approved employment start and end dates. Employment is not permitted before the approved start date or after the approved end date. OPT is **not** contingent upon an employment offer. Since you must have the authorization before you begin to work, be sure to apply well in advance of your completion of your degree as the current processing time at USCIS can take from 3-6 months.
6. All students that have been approved for OPT **MUST** report any changes in employment and addresses to the DSO school official. The DSO has to have an update from the student every 90 days to keep the student in compliance. The DSO is required to terminate any student that has not complied with the DHS law. Notification can be through email, phone or mail.

CHANGES TO OPT:

1. Changes to the OPT start and end dates are not easily made. Please be certain of your anticipated employment start and end dates prior to scheduling your appointment with your International Student Adviser. Changes may delay receipt of the EAD.
2. Cancellation of the OPT Application must be submitted prior to issuance of the EAD; Application fee will not be refunded.
3. Job change is possible; OPT is not related to a specific employer or place of employment. Submit changes of address to the student development office.
4. Reapplications are possible. If you are eligible to apply for OPT more than once (total approved time may not exceed 12 months per degree level), you must complete new OPT application forms and submit the required fee each time. **Applications cannot be accepted after academic program is completed.**

OPT HOURS & LIMITATIONS

1. Employment on OPT must be directly related to your major area of study and commensurate with your educational level
2. If previously authorized for 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training, you will not be eligible for OPT
3. Part-time OPT is authorized for up to 20 hours per week; Part-time OPT is deducted from the 12-month limit at 50%
4. OPT may be used while school is in session, prior to course completion, provided that it does not exceed 20 hours per week
5. OPT may be used full-time only during official annual summer vacation or after all course work is completed for your degree
6. OPT after program degree completion is granted for full-time use.
7. OPT start date must fall within **60 days of program completion** (this is not necessarily the same date as graduation day)
8. On full-time OPT, you may enroll in classes that are "incidental" to the employment. Do not begin a new degree program on OPT.

TRAVEL AND REENTRY ON OPT

- After program completion, you should **NOT** depart the U.S. before you receive the EAD. If you travel with the EAD, you must present the following at the U.S. Port of Entry: valid I-20, valid EAD, valid visa, valid passport, and proof of employment/offer. Please note that travel signatures are valid on page 3 of the I-20 (same page as the OPT recommendation) for only 6 months while on OPT!



OPT APPLICATION FORM
Optional Practical Training
International Student & Scholar Services

STUDENT INFORMATION

Student ID number _____

 Last/Family Name (must match passport name exactly)

 First/Given Name Middle

 Academic Degree Level

 OPT start date _____ OPT end date _____

 Date expected to complete all requirements for graduation

 Employer/Company Name (if known)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) ___ no ___ yes.

 Employer/Company Telephone Number

If yes,

 CPT start Date _____ CPT end date

 Employer/Company Street Address State Zip Code

 CPT start Date _____ CPT end date

 Hours (full-time if known) Hours (part-time if known)

I _____ (print name) _____ (ID#) **certify that I understand that OPT must be related to my field of study and I understand that I must apply for OPT prior to academic degree completion.**

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

TO THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR

To be completed and signed by the Academic Advisor or Department Head or Dean. Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an employment option available to F-1 students when the employment is directly related to the major area of study. The OPT application process is facilitated through the student development office, but final authorization is processed by Immigration (USCIS). It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the application is submitted to USCIS prior to graduation. **All** forms must be submitted and receipted at the appropriate USCIS center prior to the student's program completion date (It is best to apply at least 90 days prior to graduation but **MUST** be received by USCIS before graduation date).

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Advisor Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Advisor Name and Title: _____