

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

Optional Practical Training is a type of work permission available for eligible F-1 students, allowing them to obtain real-world work experience related to their field of study.

How many types of OPT are there?

There are three general types of OPT – please see below.

- **Pre-Completion OPT:** Any portion of OPT that is used before a student's Program End Date on his/her Form I-20. This type of employment may be full-time or part-time.
- **Post-Completion OPT:** Any portion of OPT that is used after a student's Program End Date on his/her Form I-20. This type of employment must be full-time.
- **STEM OPT Extension:** This type of OPT is for students who majored in designated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) degrees approved by Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

What are the eligibility requirements?

- The student has been a full-time student in a SEVP-approved college or university for one academic year
- The student is not studying English as a Second Language (ESL).
- The student's proposed employment relates to the student's major area of study.
- The student has not used all of the practical training available at the current level of study.
- The student has not been authorized for 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

How do I apply for OPT?

Students interested in applying for OPT need to schedule an appointment with an ISS advisor. ****Walk-in appointments are not be accepted for OPT applications. ****

- Complete the OPT Request Form on page 2 of this packet.
- Complete [Form I-765 \(Application for Employment Authorization\)](#)
- Two U.S. style passport photos (your name and admission number should be written on the back of the photos in pencil)
- Copies of all previously issued I-20 forms (including I-20 forms issued from other schools)
- Copy of your Form I-94
- Copy of the ID page of your passport
- Copies of any previously issued Employment Authorization Documents (EAD card)
- Copy of your new TSC Form I-20, after the OPT recommendation has been made in SEVIS
- Cashier's check, personal check, money order, credit card ([using Form G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transactions](#)) for **\$410.00**. If you pay by check, you must make your check payable to Department of Homeland Security



Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request Form

(To be submitted to International Student Services)

Student Name: _____

Program of Study (A.A. or A.S): _____

Form I-20 Start Date: _____ Form I-20 End Date: _____

OPT Employment Start Date (mm/dd/yyyy): _____

OPT Employment End Date (mm/dd/yyyy): _____

I am applying for (circle one) Pre-Completion OPT Post-Completion OPT

Explain how the employment is related to your major area of study:

Optional: If you know where you will be employed:

Employer Name: _____

Employer Address: _____

Student Signature

Date

Optional Practical Training – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What type of visa am I on during OPT?

OPT is not a different visa. You are still on your F-1 visa. OPT is a benefit offered to F-1 visa holders.

How long does the OPT application process take?

Students submit their OPT applications to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). It can take up to three months to receive approval. Students *are not eligible* to begin working while their OPT application is pending.

Do I need to have a job offer when I apply for OPT?

No, you do not need to have a job when you apply for OPT.

Can I begin working before I receive my Employment Authorization Document (EAD)?

No, you must receive the EAD before you can begin working.

What *Start Date* should I put on the OPT Request Form?

For Post-Completion OPT, your *Start Date* must be within 60 days of your Program End Date on your Form I-20. Students should discuss their employment plans with an ISS advisor to select the best possible *Start Date* on the Form I-765.

Can I change employers during OPT?

Yes. You can change employers as long as the employment is directly related to your field of study.

Do I need to have a job during Post-Completion OPT?

Yes. Students are allowed to accumulate a total of 90 days of unemployment during the OPT period.

What should I do if I exceed the 90-day unemployment limit?

While the ISS does not report this violation in SEVIS, students are expected to leave the United States or change status if you exceed 90 days of unemployment while on OPT.

I have submitted my OPT application to USCIS and the application is pending. Can I travel outside the United States? It depends – if it is before graduation (before the program end date on your Form I-20), then yes. If it is after graduation, then no. To re-enter the United States after graduation, you would need to have a valid EAD card, current F-1 visa stamp, I-20 Travel Signature within the last six months, and proof of employment or job offer letter.