



International Student Services Program **OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING**

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Form I-765 or USCIS receipt for online filing | <input type="checkbox"/> Had less than 12 months of full-time CPT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Request for Practical Training Form | <input type="checkbox"/> Taken care of holds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have passport, I-94, recent I20 / old EAD card | <input type="checkbox"/> Have two passport photos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have check or money order for fee | |

Optional Practical Training is defined as "temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student's major area of study".

Eligibility and Job Requirements

- Student must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full year before being eligible for OPT. However, students may submit the application up to 90 days prior to being enrolled for one full academic year, provided the employment will not begin until the completion of one academic year.
- Work done for OPT must be directly related to the student's major area of study and commensurate with the student's educational level.
- Students do not need an offer of employment prior to applying for OPT.

Duration and Limitations

- Students are allowed 12 months of OPT per academic level (Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, etc.)
- Students may take OPT during summer vacations, before completing coursework, in the time period between completing coursework and finishing thesis or dissertation, or after receiving a degree.
- Students with coursework remaining are limited to 20 hours per week of OPT while school is in session.
- Students who have completed all course requirements for a degree except for a thesis, dissertation, or equivalent, are eligible for full-time OPT while they make normal progress toward completing thesis requirements.

Note:

- Any OPT taken before a degree is completed is counted against the 12 month total and reduces the time available after the degree is awarded.
- You may not begin work until your EAD card is in hand.
- Once you have submitted your application for OPT to the USCIS, the requested dates cannot be changed.

Post-Completion OPT

- Students must apply for post-completion OPT before the end date on the I-20 form.
- OPT taken after completion of the course of study will only be granted for full-time employment. (Full-time employment equals any number of hours exceeding 20 hours per week.)
- Post-completion OPT must be completed within a 14 month period following completion of study.
- Transfer Students: A student transferring to another institution may continue in OPT while in the transfer process, but must terminate employment upon registration at the transfer-in school.

Application Procedures:

*Important! Students should apply for OPT at least 3 months before graduation.

- Complete USCIS Forms [I-765 Request for Employment Authorization](#).
- Locate and make photocopies of the following:
 - All prior I-20 forms issued
 - Passport
 - All previously issued EAD cards
- Obtain two immigration-style photos (passport photos).
- Write a check or obtain a money order made payable to the US. Department of Homeland Security. See *USCIS website for current fee information*.
- Bring all documents above to the International Student Services office, where we will make the request for OPT through SEVIS and generate a new Form I-20 with IPT recommendations.

Frequently Asked Questions about OPT:

What if my application is delayed? When can I begin work?

Unfortunately, the local office no longer grants temporary work authorization. The best way to avoid this scenario is to apply as early as possible.

May I travel out of the country and reenter if my request for OPT is pending?

Yes, you may reenter the country to search for employment. Take your Form I-797 (Notice of Action) with you when you depart the U.S.

May I travel out of the country and reenter if I leave after OPT has been granted?

*If your OPT has been approved and you depart before you get a job, then your OPT ends and you cannot reenter the U.S.

*If your OPT has been approved and you have an offer of employment, you may travel and reenter to resume work for that employer. Take your EAD card and a letter from your employer with you when you depart the U.S.

Must I notify the DSO of changes in address while on OPT?

Yes, you must continue to report changes in address to the DSO while engaged in post-completion optional practical training.