

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING FOR OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

Definition:

An F-1 student may apply to the U. S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES for optional practical training (OPT). OPT is defined as temporary employment that is directly related to the student's major field of study. F-1 students are eligible to apply for OPT when they have been in F-1 status for one academic year, and have otherwise maintained their F-1 status.

Optional Practical training (OPT) falls into five categories:

1. During the student's annual vacation and when school is not in session.
2. While school is in session, provided the OPT does not exceed 20 hours a week.
3. Full-time after the completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis).
4. Full-time after completion of the course of study. **This date is determined by the date when all requirements for the degree program have been met, it is not necessarily the date of graduation.**
5. STEM Extension requests

Time Limitations:

Initial Optional practical training may be granted for a maximum of 12 months, which includes before and after completion of studies. However, a student is eligible for 12 months of OPT after completion of each level. STEM extensions are granted only once for all levels. Part-time practical training (20 hours per week or less) will be deducted from the available practical training at one-half the full-time rate.

DSO AUTHORIZATION AND APPLICATION DEADLINE:

To be authorized for OPT a student must apply to the Designated School Official in the ISS office for recommendation and the USCIS will adjudicate the request. The student **must apply far enough in advance** to allow the SEVIS record to be updated, and for the I-765 packet to be received at the Texas Service Center within the 60 day grace period following program completion. Allow 60-90 days from the time you file your request with the Texas Service Center before you plan to begin your employment.

Please review these instructions and gather the necessary items listed below and **then** submit everything to the Office of International Student Services, Westby Hall, 2nd Floor. We will be happy to answer any questions you have regarding this process.

1. Complete, print and sign Form I-765 found at <http://www.uscis.gov/I-765>
2. Be sure to carefully enter all information and verify that you have typed it correctly, so that it can easily be read by the representatives of the USCIS at the Texas Service Center. The information you submit needs to be exact, be sure you check the I-765 for errors.

Important Notes:

Line 3 Address: If you are uncertain of your address several months from now (when your card is likely to be issued), you must be sure to put an address on the I-765 Form where you will be able to receive mail at that time or be sure to put a Forward Order on File with the US Post Office so your mail from USCIS will reach you. If you were to move prior to receiving the EAD, the EAD could be returned to the Service Center. Be sure you use a secure address on the I-765, where someone resides who will forward your mail if you plan to move.

Line 10 should be the full number at the top of your current I-94 card

Line 16 of the Form I-765; *choose the appropriate one from this list:*

- (c) (3) (A) **for Pre-completion OPT – used prior to completion & graduation**
- (c) (3) (B) **for initial post-completion OPT – used following program completion**
- (c) (3) (C) **for 17 month STEM extension OPT – used following 12 month OPT for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math majors only**

3. Obtain and bring in 2 identical full frontal/passport style photos. The photos must be taken not more than 30 days prior to submission of your application. See additional information in this packet regarding photo specifications. Print your full name in pencil on the back of each photo. Place the photos in the attached envelope. Print your name in pen clearly on the label on the envelope. Do not seal the envelope.
4. Bring in a copy of the front and back of your current I-94 card on one sheet of paper
5. Bring in copies (front and back) of any previously issued Employment Authorization Documents (EAD cards)
6. Prepare a money order or personal check payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" in the amount of \$340.00. A money order will expedite your request as personal checks must clear the bank before any additional processing takes place. (You may need to write small so that all of the words appear on the first line of the money order or check.)
7. Submit the attached yellow form indicating your official date of graduation (May, August, or December) and the dates you would like to work. *If you are required to submit a thesis or dissertation your completion date will be the date you will submit your final copies to the library if you have already completed all course work.* Once these dates are selected and submitted, they cannot be changed so decide carefully. (Beginning date can be no later than 60 days following official completion date)
8. Two new I-20s will be prepared for qualified applicants listing the recommendation for OPT on page 3. You should return to the ISS office to sign your I-20s 5 days after you submitted your request. Your application will cannot be mailed without your signature, so be sure you return to sign the forms. You will mail one I-20 to the Texas Service Center in the envelope provided and keep the other one as your current I-20.
9. You must carefully review your new I-20s to ensure that the request is exactly what you are wanting. If it is mailed with incorrect information the responsibility is the students (the ISS office will not pay to submit a corrected form).

Please note that upon receipt of your application by USCIS, processing time may take 4 to 12 weeks. Authorization to work must be provided by USCIS and **you must obtain your EAD card in the mail before you may begin work** and you may **only work in jobs in your major field of study.**

Note of caution: **IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR AND THE STUDENT ARE CONFIDENT OF THE DATE OF COMPLETION.**

WARNING: If you fail to complete the graduation requirements you may jeopardize your immigration status and lose your Optional Practical Training opportunity. As part of the application process USCIS requires that the ISS reflect your date of completion in your SEVIS record. This means that **your completion of studies date (#5 on your I-20) will be shortened to the date you and your advisor have entered in this application.**

If for some reason you do not graduate and will be required to enroll in the next semester you **must** contact the ISS prior to the end date on your I-20. Failure to do so may cause you to be required to file for reinstatement to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) and forfeit your OPT benefit.

I understand the risks involved in applying for OPT and want to continue with the submission of my OPT application to the USCIS.

(Date)

(Print name)

(Signature)

