

Optional Practical Training

General Information

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment authorization available to international students who have been in valid F-1 status for at least two consecutive semesters and who plan to seek employment in the U.S. related to their program of study. OPT approval is granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) and the application process takes approximately three months. Student must also have a 2.0 GPA.

OPT Employment Rule

With regard to all types of employment, it must relate to the student's program of study. In addition, a student may work up to 20 hours per week when classes are in session. A student may work more than 20 hours per week when classes are not in session.

Volunteering as Employment

Many students are able to obtain experience that is most appropriate to their line of work by engaging in volunteer work or unpaid internships. This is possible during the standard 12-month OPT period. Work as a volunteer or unpaid intern must not violate any labor laws and should not be for less than 20 hours per week post-completion OPT. Students should provide a written volunteer agreement within 7 days of start of employment to the International Office. While working as volunteer, students are not eligible for a STEM OPT Extension.

SEVIS Reporting Requirements While on OPT

All students on OPT must report any of the following conditions to the International Student Advisor within 10 working days:

- Any change in name or address
- Any change in immigration status
- Any change or termination of employment
- Volunteer employment

Eligibility Requirements

- The student must have been enrolled full-time for at least two consecutive semesters and be in valid F-1 status at the time of application.

How to determine your OPT Start Date

You can start your OPT the day after you graduate or up to 60 days after graduation. It is extremely important that you determine your OPT start date at the beginning of your final semester. Any questions or concerns about OPT start date can be addressed by an International Student Adviser.

Application Deadline

The earliest you can apply for OPT is 90 days before your graduation date. Please apply approximately 90 days before you plan to start your OPT since the application has to be sent to USCIS. It will take the USCIS Potomac Service Center 2-3 months to process your application sometimes longer. You cannot start employment until you have received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.

Application Procedure

Please bring the following completed documents to the International Student Advisor to apply for OPT.

STEP	REQUIRED DOCUMENTS (Submit to the ISS Office to apply for OPT)	√
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed I-765 	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check for \$410 made payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security • 2 recent passport-style photos on white background. The photo must be 2x2 inches; the images must be no more than 1 3/8 inches from the top of the head to the chin. Your name and I-94 number must be printed in pencil on the back of the photos. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from your academic adviser confirming expected graduation date 	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of your most recent I-94 printout 	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Requested Starting Date: You can start your OPT up to 60 days after the last day of your last semester of study. F-1 students are eligible for 365 days of OPT.</i> 	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printed unofficial transcript of your grades. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of your biographical/picture page and visa page from your passport <p>(The expiration date should be notated on the picture page. If not, please attach a page that shows the expiration date of your passport. Your passport should not be expired when you apply.)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

During your appointment an advisor will create your new, OPT Form I-20 for you. After your appointment you will need to send your application for OPT to the USCIS office in Phoenix, AZ. The

application **must** reach the USCIS office within 30 days of the time that the I-20 is created on the day of your appointment.

If you are sending your application via the U.S. Postal Service (Certified, Express Mail) You must send it to the following address:

USCIS
PO Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

If you are sending your application through a courier service (such as UPS or FedEx) you must send it to the following address:

USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034