Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Visa Holders

Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows you to work 12 months in a job directly related to your major field of study. To be eligible for OPT you must have been full time in (a) F-1 status for one academic year (9 consecutive months) and (b) the same degree program during that academic year. OPT can be obtained after each higher degree level (Bachelors or Masters or Ph.D.). You can apply for OPT based either on graduation or completion of coursework.

**Students in Intensive English programs are not eligible for OPT**

**Applying for OPT is a Two-Step Process as Described Below**

**Step 1: International Students Scholars (ISS) recommends OPT.**
For ISS to recommend OPT, you must make an appointment with an ISA. ISS can recommend OPT as early as 3 months before graduation or coursework completion. Do not file OPT earlier than 90 days from graduation date.

**Step 2: You apply to USCIS for the OPT work authorization.**
See page 2 of this handout for complete application instructions.
USCIS must receive your application by the last day of the semester you apply for OPT. USCIS will not accept applications for OPT after the last day of the semester you graduate.
The start date for OPT must be no later than 59 days after graduation date or coursework completion.
We encourage you to apply for OPT at the beginning of your graduation semester to obtain the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS immediately after graduation. You must have the EAD to begin employment. **You must file for OPT within 30 days of OPT recommendation by ISS.**

**To Maintain Your Status During OPT**
• Keep your address updated. Within 10 days of moving you must inform USCIS through:
  o On-line with CIS. The website is: [https://egov.immigration.gov/crisgwi/go?action=cao](https://egov.immigration.gov/crisgwi/go?action=cao)
  o NSEERS (special registration students) must mail AR-11SR form. Send this by Certified Mail and request a return Certified Mail receipt.

• Once you receive the EAD, you should remain in the U. S. until you have either a job or a job offer. If you leave the U. S. without a job or job offer, the OPT may be cancelled at the border and you will not be able to reenter or renew your F-1 visa.

• Provide ISS with a photocopy of your EAD. We must have a copy to sign your I-20 for travel.
• Inform ISS if you: (a) leave the U. S. permanently, (b) decide to return to school in a degree program, or (c) change your status. We must notify USCIS of such changes.
• Have ISS sign your I-20 for travel if you plan to leave the U. S.

**OPT is automatically ended if you **
Begin a new degree program at ISU or any other school or change your status.
Instructions for complete OPT recommendation and application information

Step 1: ISS Recommends OPT

1. Have your academic adviser or major professor complete the OPT Endorsement Form (attached). This form must be complete before an ISA can recommend OPT.
2. Determine the OPT start date. It must be no later than 59 days after graduation or completion of coursework, as designated on the OPT Endorsement Form.
4. Meet with the ISA to request an OPT recommendation I-20. For an appointment, please call 651-793 1219 or 651 793-1315.
5. Bring all requested items to the meeting

Step 2: You Apply to USCIS for OPT EAD

• Bring the following completed forms to the meeting:
  i. OPT Endorsement Form
  ii. I-765
and the following items listed below:

TOP Send these Originals:

 o I-765 completely filled out and signed. Use a valid address on the form I-765: line #2
 o Two color photos – standard passport photos. Lightly print your name on the back of each photo with pencil (if you have an “A” number, add that also).

TOP Send these Photocopies:

 o Identity pages from your passport (picture, number, and expiration date)
 o U. S. visa page from your passport
 o Both sides of your I-94
 o Driver’s license
 o Metro State student card
 o All previously issued I-20’s
 o I-20 with the OPT recommendation on page 3. Send COPY only, not original
 o Any previously-issued EAD cards
 o Job offer letter, if you have one. You do not need a job offer to receive OPT.

Step 3 Mailing of documents:
Send your application by Certified Mail to (request a return receipt and keep the receipt):
USCIS Phoenix Lockbox
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For Express Mail and Courier delivers:
USCIS
Attention: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100, Phoenix, AZ 85034

Note: When USCIS receives your OPT application, they will notify you by Notice of Action letter with the LIN tracking number. Your EAD card will be mailed to the address you put on the I-765.
Optional Practical Training (OPT) Endorsement Form

From: Academic Adviser/Major Professor

To: International Students and Services
Founders Hall

Date: ____________________________

RE: ____________________________       _____________ ___________
Student Name                                                        University I. D. Number

Date of coursework completion: _________________________________________
(only if OPT based on coursework completion)

Anticipated start date of OPT _____________________________________________

Date of graduation:     ___________________________________________________

Printed name of adviser/major professor:   ___________________________________

Signature of adviser/major professor:    _____________________________________

Telephone / e-mail address:   _____________________________________________

The adviser/major professor signature indicates the academic department expects the student to graduate on the date provided above.

This information is needed for the International Student Services (ISS) to recommend OPT. Practical training is temporary employment granted to students to gain work experience related to their field of study.

If you have questions about practical training, please contact ISS at 651-793-1219.

________________________________      _________________________________
Print Name Signature

I understand that I need to mail my completed OPT application no later than 30 days from the issue date of the signed I-20 or it is no longer valid.