

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. OPT is only offered once per degree completion.

Students in Intensive English programs are not eligible for OPT

Applying for OPT is a Three-Step Process as Described Below:

Step 1: International Student Services (ISS) recommends OPT.

For ISS to recommend OPT you must make an appointment with an ISS. 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 within 90 days of graduation semester to obtain the Employment Authorization Document (EAD). You must have the EAD to begin employment. After you applied for OPT it is important to send the documents **and received by USCIS within 30 days of the date recommendation by ISS. If the documents are sent later than 30 days your application will be denied for OPT.**

Step 3: Maintain Your Status During OPT

Keep your address updated. Within 10 days of moving you must inform USCIS through:

- On-line with CIS. The website is: <https://egov.uscis.gov/coa/displayCOAForm.do>
- Complete and mail directly to USCIS the Form AR-11 each time you move <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/ar-11.pdf>
- 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 and update the international student services office of your employment information within 90 days.**
- **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 MSU or any other school or change your status.**

Instructions for Completing OPT Recommendation

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.
3. Complete an I-765 form available at: <http://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
4. Meet with the ISS 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:

- OPT Endorsement Form (on page 3)
- I-765 form at <http://www.uscis.gov/i-765>
 - I-765 completely filled out and *signed*. Use a valid address on the form I-765: *line #2*
 - Personal check for \$410 payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
 - 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*).

🕒 **Make Photocopies and bring to the meeting:**

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

Step 3 Mailing of document needs to be received by USCIS within 30 days of I-20 issued date to be valid. After 30 days the I-20 is no longer valid.

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 Student Service Office
Founders Hall Second Floor

Date: _____

RE: _____
Student Name

University I. D. Number

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

Anticipated start date of OPT _____
(Select a day within 59 days of graduation)

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. (If the student does not graduate please notify the ISS department)

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 (Student)

Signature

I understand that I need to mail my completed OPT application and it must be received by USCIS no later than 30 days from the issue date of the signed I-20 or it is no longer valid. If received after 30 days your application will be denied.