Optional Practical Training (OPT) Information and Application

Optional practical training (OPT) is defined in the regulations as "temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student's major area of study."

**Three kinds of OPT can be identified:**

1. **Pre-completion OPT**
   - "During the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, if the student is currently enrolled, and is eligible for registration and intends to register for the next term or session" or
   - "While school is in session, provided that practical training does not exceed 20 hours a week while school is in session". Student must maintain a full course of study during the period of employment.

2. **Post-completion OPT** **most commonly used at CIIS**
   - "After completion of the course of study, or, for a student in a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree program, after completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or equivalent)...."

3. **Extensions of post-completion OPT for certain Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students (only eligible to HSX PhD students)**

**Filing the OPT application with the USCIS**

- An applicant for **pre-completion** OPT can file a Form I-765 "up to 90 days before being enrolled for one full academic year, provided that the period of employment will not start prior to the completion of the full academic year."

- An applicant for **post-completion** OPT can file a Form I-765 "up to 90 days prior to his or her program end-date and no later than 60 days after his or her program end-date. The student must also file the Form I-765 with USCIS within 30 days of the date the DSO enters the recommendation of OPT into his or her SEVIS record."

**Preconditions**

- Student must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis at an SEVP-approved school for one full academic year before being eligible for OPT.
- Available both before and after completion of the educational objective, but different rules apply to pre- and post-completion OPT.
- Students in English language training programs are not eligible for OPT.
- Part-time F-1 "border commuter students" are eligible only for CPT and post-completion OPT. OPT must be "directly related to the student's major area of study."

**Hours per week**

- 20 hours/week limit for pre-completion OPT done while school is in session and student still has coursework to complete.
- Full-time employment can be requested for pre-completion OPT done during official school breaks, and for students who have completed all requirements for their degree except for thesis or dissertation.
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- For standard post-completion OPT, a student must be adequately employed to avoid limits on unemployment. Please review the CIIS OPT FAQ document for details.

Location
- Students may engage in OPT for any employer in the U.S. for the duration of OPT authorization; as long as the employment qualifies under OPT standards.

Duration
- Standard OPT is available for a cumulative maximum of 12 months per educational level;
- Use of pre-completion OPT impacts availability of post-completion OPT: Full-time OPT is deducted from the 12 month cumulative limit at the full-time rate; Part-time pre-completion OPT is deducted from the 12 month cumulative limit at a 50% rate.

Field/level of work
- Must be directly related to the student's major field of study.

Offer of employment
- No offer of employment is required to apply for standard OPT, but the student is expected to work during the OPT EAD validity period. Students on post-completion OPT are limited to an aggregate maximum of 90 days of unemployment. OPT for the STEM extension does require a job offer.

Plan Ahead!! It takes approximately 90 to 120 days to process a request for Optional Practical Training and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). You may not begin working until you have received your EAD card.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Please visit MyCIIS, Student Affairs, International Students for questions about maintaining your F-1 student visa while on OPT, travel on pending and approved OPT and employment requirements. You can access this information as an alumna.

Check Your Application Status online at: https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsp/index.jsp, or by calling 1-800-375-5283. You will need to have your 13-character application receipt number. It is a 10 digit number preceded by three letters.
APPLICATION PROCESS FOR OPT AUTHORIZATION

Make an appointment with the International Student Advisor within the eligible timeframe to apply for OPT.

Approval process

- International Student Advisor at CIIS determines student's eligibility to apply for OPT.
- International Student Advisor recommends OPT in SEVIS and provides updated I-20 form to student.
- Student files I-765 application and support documentation with USCIS for EAD card.
- Work can begin only after receiving EAD issued by USCIS, and on or after the start date on the EAD.

Please bring the following information to your appointment with the International Student Advisor:

- Form I-765, the Application for Employment Authorization, marked with the code: (c) (3) (A) at item 16 for pre-completion OPT and (c) (3) (B) for post-completion OPT. Form and Instructions are available at www.uscis.gov. *Please review the I-765 instructions. Wait to sign the form until the appointment with the International Student Advisor.

- Copies of your passport and visa (entry stamp in passport for Canadians)

- A copy of your I-94 form. To retrieve this number electronically, visit: http://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/i-94-instructions

- 2 full passport style photos, color photos with a white background, 2" x 2" and not more than six months old. Write your SEVIS ID number in pencil on the back of the photos.

- A copy of all previous I-20s from previous schools or if you changed information on your I-20 after starting at CIIS (program, extension, CPT, etc.).

- An updated SEVIS OPT I-20, provided by the International Student Advisor at the time of the appointment.

- A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EADs), if this is your first application for work authorization in the U.S. you will not have an EAD card.

- CIIS OPT Request Form (see below).

- A copy of your practicum/internship contract if applicable. Contact the Field Placement Office for your program.

- A check for the I-765 application fee (please double check fees on most current version of the I-765 instructions) OR

- Form I-912, Request for Fee Waiver (See information on MyCIIS International Students, Documents section. Fee waivers are sent along with the request for OPT, are not guaranteed and can add approximately 30 days to the OPT processing time. The decision is made by the USCIS and if denied your entire packet will be returned. You can then re-apply for OPT again with further documentation in support of the fee waiver request or pay the fee. Please discuss this option with the International Student Advisor.)
Optional Practical Training (OPT) Request Form

STUDENT INFORMATION

Name: ___________________________________  Program End Date*: ___________________________

* The program end date is the last day of the semester in which you are graduating, or the last day of your supervised practicum/internship, whichever is later. Please review the Academic Calendar for semester dates.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING INFORMATION

Requested Start Date for Authorized Employment: ____________________
*start date can be up to 60 days after your program end date

Requested End Date for Authorized Employment: _____________________
*maximum request of 12 months of OPT; may not exceed 14 months from your program end date.

Full-time or Part-time: ____________________ (full-time is used for all post-completion requests)

Describe the proposed employment for practical training/how you will use your OPT. How is it related to your field of study? This information will be input to the SEVIS system and used by the USCIS to make a decision about your approval, however what you write here does not limit you to work only in those organizations/with those populations, etc. It is giving the government an idea about how you will apply your degree.

If known at the time of application, provide information below. Note: * is a required field:

1) Employer Information: __________________________________________
   a. Employer Name or Self-Employed* ________________________________
   b. Start Date* ________________________________
   c. Full-time (more than 20 hours/week)/ Part-time (20 hours or less/week)* __________________________
   d. Employer Address* ____________________________________________
   e. Employer EIN number- highly recommended __________________________
   f. Job Title ______________________________________________________
   g. End Date _____________________________________________________

2) Explain how employment is related to student’s’ course of study* ________________________________

3) Supervisor Information: Full Name, Telephone Number, Email Address ________________________________