

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Policy

Definition

Students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one academic year in a SEVIS-approved college, university, conservatory, or seminary are eligible for optional practical training (OPT), which is defined generally as temporary employment directly related to the student's field of study, for purposes of gaining practical experience.

Student Eligibility Requirements

- A student may apply to engage in OPT for employment commensurate with their educational level, and directly related to their major area of study during the following periods:
- During the student's annual vacation, as long as the student intends to register for the next semester (it is recommended that students have a job offer before applying);
- While school is in session, provided that practical training does not exceed 20 hours per week (it is recommended that students have a job offer before applying);
- After completion of all course requirements, excluding thesis or equivalent, for bachelor's, master's or doctoral programs; or
- After completion of the course of study

Restrictions on OPT

1. OPT may not begin later than 60 days after completion date indicated in Item 5 on the I-20 and must end no later than 14 months after the completion date.
2. Periods of unemployment are limited to 90 days while on post-completion OPT or 120 days (total) for someone who has obtained the 17-month STEM OPT extension.
3. Once authorized, OPT cannot be rescinded nor can the dates be changed.
4. Students in English language training programs are ineligible for practical training.

OPT Application and Approval Process

DSO Responsibilities: A student must initiate the OPT application process by requesting a recommendation for OPT from his or her DSO. Upon making the recommendation, the DSO will provide the student a signed Form I-20 indicating that recommendation.

Note: OPT application + application materials should be mailed in the following order:

1. G-1145 with check (\$410 made out to U.S. Department of Homeland Security as of 12/2016) and photos attached. Always check <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765> for current rates.
2. I-765
3. 1-20s in chronological order (most recent on top)
4. Copy of visa
5. Copy of passport
6. Copy of I-94
7. Advisor approval (OPT Form 1)

Student Responsibilities: Request I-20 with OPT recommendation and then:

1. Complete OPT application and ALL USF required documentation for employment authorization:

- a. Form I-765 and supply all requested supporting documentation
 - b. Form G-1145- Optional, but allows students to receive e-notifications regarding the status of their OPT application
 - c. OPT Form 1- Academic advisor approval for OPT
 - d. OPT Form 2- OPT Start Date
 - e. OPT Form 3- Acknowledgement of responsibilities while engaged in OPT
2. Meet filing deadlines for post-completion OPT: students must properly file their I-765 up to 90 days prior to their program end-date and no later than 60 days after their program end-date. Students must also file the Form I-765 with USCIS within 30 days of the date the DSO enters the recommendation of OPT SEVIS record.