

F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) Information & Instructions

Definition

Optional Practical Training is work authorization for professional employment in the student's field of study that is not part of the academic curriculum. It can be granted at four different times in a student's academic career:

1. During summer or winter break when school is not in session;
2. After the completion of all course requirements for the degree, but before completion of the thesis;
3. Part-time during an academic term (20 hours/week or less);
4. After completion of the degree (Post-Completion OPT)

Maximum Time Allowed

A **maximum period of twelve months (full-time)** Optional Practical Training can be granted **per degree level**. Students are eligible for an additional twelve months with each higher degree level.

OPT may either be full-time (more than 20 hours per week) or part-time (20 hours or less per week). Part-time OPT is deducted from the total amount of available OPT at one-half the full-time rate. For example, two months of part-time OPT is equal to one full-time month.

Any part-time **Curricular** Practical Training (CPT) will not be deducted from the **Optional** Practical Training period available to students. **However, if a student uses twelve months of full-time Curricular Practical Training, no additional Optional Practical Training is permitted.**

Eligibility/When To Apply

To be eligible, a student must be in valid F-1 status and have been maintaining F-1 status for a **minimum of nine consecutive months**.

For pre-completion Optional Practical Training (before graduation): Students can apply up to 120 days before the beginning of the employment.

For post-completion Optional Practical Training (after graduation): Students can apply up to 90 days before or within 60 days after the completion of the degree. The application for OPT must be received by the U.S. CIS before the end of the 60 days following the degree completion date.

Current processing times can be more than 3 months, so it's best to apply early.

How To Apply

1. Have your academic faculty advisor complete the *OPT Recommendation Form for F-1 Students* (printable form available at the International Programs website).
2. Submit the completed *OPT Recommendation Form* to the Office of International Programs. If you are eligible, the office will process a new SEVIS I-20 with an Optional Practical Training endorsement and schedule an appointment to meet with you.

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How To Apply, continued

3. **Employment cannot begin until the U.S. CIS issues an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card to the student.** To obtain an EAD, you must submit all required documents (see below) to a regional U.S. CIS Lockbox **within 30 days of the international student advisor's (DSO/Designated School Official) recommendation on the new I-20 document.**

Application Materials Checklist:

You'll need to collect and mail the following (address below) in the order they are listed below:

<u>Checklist</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Notes</u>
	Form G-1145	To request a confirmation (by text and/or e-mail) to be sent to you when the USCIS accepts your application This form must go on top of your application. Link: https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145
	\$410 fee	Send a personal check or money order made payable to: Department of Homeland Security
	Two passport-type photos	Must be taken within 30 days of applying for OPT and include your name and I-94 printed on the back
	Copy of New Form I-20 with OPT endorsement	All documents must be received by the U.S. CIS within 30 days of the DSO's signature on the new I-20
	Completed, original Form I-765	Don't forget to sign and date on page 4, section 7! Link: https://www.uscis.gov/i-765 Eligibility category for post-completion OPT: (c)(3)(B)
	Copies of Passport ID page and F-1 visa	Make sure your passport isn't expired.
	Copy of electronic I-94 record	This is your proof of legal entry into the U.S. Link: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov

_____ **If you were approved for Curricular Practical Training (CPT):** You must also include proof of CPT approval, such as copies of your Form I-20/s issued for CPT.

_____ **If you were approved for OPT previously (at another degree level) and/or Off-Campus Employment Authorization Based on Severe Economic Hardship:** You must also include copies of your EAD cards.

Mail the above materials/documents by **certified mail or return receipt** to the address below:

If sending by US Post Office mail:	If sending by FedEx, UPS or DHL:
USCIS PO Box 21281 Phoenix, AZ 85036	USCIS Attn: NFB AOS 1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100 Phoenix, AZ 85034

****Always keep copies of all documents sent to and received from the U.S. CIS****

Change of address: If you change your address while the OPT application is in process, you need to update your address at: www.uscis.gov/addresschange

IMPORTANT! Your I-20 end date will be changed to match your program end date. If you **do not complete your degree** when expected, you **must apply for a program extension before your new OPT I-20 expires.**