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.

(continued on next page)
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form G-1145</td>
<td>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: <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145">https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$410 fee</td>
<td>Send a personal check or money order made payable to: Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two passport-type photos</td>
<td>Must be taken within 30 days of applying for OPT and include your name and I-94 printed on the back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy of New Form I-20 with OPT endorsement</td>
<td>All documents must be received by the U.S. CIS within 30 days of the DSO’s signature on the new I-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed, original Form I-765</td>
<td>Don’t forget to sign and date on page 4, section 7! Link: <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/i-765">https://www.uscis.gov/i-765</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies of Passport ID page and F-1 visa</td>
<td>Make sure your passport isn’t expired.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy of electronic I-94 record</td>
<td>This is your proof of legal entry into the U.S. Link: <a href="https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov">https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov</a></td>
<td></td>
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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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If sending by US Post Office mail:</th>
<th>If sending by FedEx, UPS or DHL:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 21281</td>
<td>Attn: NFB AOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85036</td>
<td>1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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](http://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.