OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) provides the possibility for you to work in the United States, for 12 months, in your field of study (as indicated on your I-20). F-1 students in a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree program are eligible to apply for OPT in the following situations:

Pre Completion OPT:
1. part-time while school is in session (not to exceed 20 hours a week);
2. full-time during the annual vacation quarter if you intend to register for the next quarter;

Post Completion OPT:
3. full-time after completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or the equivalent);
4. full-time after completion of all degree requirements (including coursework and thesis or the equivalent)

A student is eligible for a maximum of 12 months full-time Optional Practical Training per degree level. A student who completes an approved period of OPT and then returns to school to complete a degree program at a higher level would be eligible for another period of OPT.

Since there is a limit of 12 months of authorization, most students save their OPT and apply for OPT authorization to begin after completion of all degree requirements (#4 above). If you are interested in utilizing OPT prior to completion of all your degree requirements, please meet with an international student advisor to review your situation.

Your application for OPT must first be recommended by an advisor in the Center for International Education, and then mailed to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) with jurisdiction over your place of residence.

You may submit your OPT application as early as 90 days prior to your anticipated degree completion and up to 60 days after the program end-date, provided that it is filed within 30 days of the date the International Student Advisor/DSO enters the OPT recommendation into SEVIS system.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Optional practical training must be directly related to your major field of study (however, a job offer is NOT required at the time of application).
- You must be in valid F-1 status at the time of application.
- You must have completed 1 academic year (3 quarters) of full-time study prior to your anticipated degree completion date.
APPLICATION PROCEDURE

In order to apply for OPT; you will need to follow the procedures below:

1. Have your academic advisor(s) complete the attached Academic Advisor Recommendation.
   - Graduate students: visit an advisor in your academic department
   - Undergraduate students: two academic advisors complete this recommendation (1) your major department advisor and (2) a General education advisor
     -(GE advisors are Sam Tran or Joy Vickers in AACE. Please call 510-885-3621 to schedule an appointment)

2. Complete Form I-765. **The address on your I-765 needs to be your current residential address. If you move, you must notify CIE of your address change. Note:** the US Postal Service does not forward mail from USCIS.

3. Have two immigration photographs taken (see enclosed photograph specifications). Photos must be taken within the previous 30 days.

4. Schedule an appointment to meet with an international student advisor at the Center for International Education (call 510-885-2880) to submit completed forms listed below.

5. Bring the following documents to your CIE appointment:
   - Passport, I-94, and all original I-20s you have been issued (I-94 available at www.cbp.gov/I94)
   - Completed Form I-765 (form available at www.uscis.gov) **do not submit form online unless instructed to do so by an international student advisor.**
   - Completed Academic Advisor Recommendation.
   - Completed OPT Request Dates .
   - Two passport style photographs.
   - Check for $410.00 payable to The Department of Homeland Security.
   - Any Employment Authorization Documents you have received previously.

6. Once it has been determined that your application is complete and you are eligible for the OPT benefit, the international student advisor will issue you a new I-20 with the OPT recommendation, and submit your application to USCIS via UPS.

THEN WHAT?

Once USCIS receives the application, a receipt will be processed and sent to the address on the I-765 (this normally takes 3-5 weeks). **THE USCIS HAS, BY LAW, NINETY DAYS TO PROCESS YOUR APPLICATION and the “standard” length of time required for processing is subject to change.** If you have not received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) a full 90 days after the Notice Date on your receipt from USCIS, and your requested OPT start date has passed, please contact CIE for further guidance. Also, if you do not receive a receipt notice from USCIS within 5 weeks after you submitted your application, check with CIE.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

- **How do I choose my post-completion OPT dates?**
  The start date of your OPT period can be any date in the 60 day period following your completion of studies date. The latest OPT end date can be 12 months after the requested start date.

- **How can I check the status of my pending application?**
  Visit the following USCIS website: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/landing.do

- **I did a Co-op last quarter and was authorized for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for 3 months. Does this mean that I only have 9 months of OPT available to me?**
  No. Curricular Practical Training is a separate category of employment authorization, and does not count towards your 12 months of OPT. HOWEVER, if you do 12 months of Full-time CPT, you lose your eligibility for Optional Practical Training. Anything less than 12 months full-time CPT will NOT deduct from your OPT.

- **If I apply for OPT early (during the 90 days before completing my program), does that mean I will be able to start working before I complete my degree program?**
  The authorized dates of employment will be listed on your Employment Authorization Document (EAD). You cannot start working before the start date on your EAD. The start date is either the start date you requested or the date USCIS approves your application, whichever is LATER.

- **I applied for OPT, but it hasn't been approved yet. I've finished all my degree requirements– can I start working? Can I do a Co-op?**
  No. Once you have completed your degree requirements, you are no longer eligible for ANY type of employment authorization, except for optional practical training. Therefore, you are not eligible for curricular practical training or on-campus employment, and your company cannot legally have you begin employment until the start date on your Employment Authorization Document.

- **I am finishing my courses this quarter, but didn’t apply for graduation on time. Does this mean I should apply for OPT during the NEXT quarter?**
  No. USCIS is not concerned about the date that your degree is officially posted (i.e. the quarter that you file for graduation). Your status as an F-1 student is based on the date that you actually complete the requirements for your degree. This date is your “completion of studies date.” Therefore, if you are completing your courses and all other degree requirements this quarter, your application for OPT must be received no later than **60 days after the end of this quarter**.
I'd like to take a trip home before beginning my OPT, is that possible?

If you leave the U.S. after you complete your program and you have not applied for Optional Practical Training, you are no longer entitled to OPT. If you have completed your degree program, and would like to travel and re-enter the U.S., please contact an international student advisor to discuss your plans. CIE recommends that you do not travel and re-enter the US unless you have both OPT approval and an offer of employment. Once you have received your EAD, you will need the following documents to return to the U.S.:

- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa stamp
- Original I-20 with travel endorsement not older than one month.
- Employment authorization document (EAD or OPT card)
- Verification of employment (job offer letter) Please note: the F-1 regulations allow for re-entry during OPT in order 'to resume employment', so you should be prepared to document your employment, or at least your efforts to gain employment.

Note: If you are absent from the U.S. for 5 consecutive months or longer, your current immigration status is considered ‘abandoned’. In other words, you may not be allowed re-entry to the U.S., even if you present a valid OPT authorization, visa, and I-20.

If I complete another degree program after OPT, do I get another 12 months of OPT?

Yes, you may be authorized 12 months of optional practical training, and become eligible for another 12 months of optional practical training when you change to a higher educational level. (i.e. completing a master's degree after a bachelor's)

Once I receive my EAD card, do I have to start working right away?

No, however, you can not be unemployed for more than 90 days during the approved 12 month OPT period.

I received my EAD and the card mentions that it is “not valid for re-entry to the U.S.”

What does this mean?

It means that you are not able to re-enter the U.S. JUST by showing the EAD. You also need to show an endorsed I-20 with OPT approval, a valid passport, and a valid F-1 visa stamp.

Can I change jobs during OPT?

Yes. Provided you report any change of name and address of employer or interruption of such employment to CIE within 10 days of the change.

Can I begin a new program of studies and use my OPT at the same time?

No, F-1 regulations state that “authorization to engage in practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfer to another school or begins study at another educational level.”
Passport Photo Requirements

Your photo is a vital part of your application. To learn more, review the information below on how to provide a suitable photo. We recommend you use a professional passport photo service to ensure your photo meets all the requirements.

All photos must be no more than 30 days old when an application is filed and must meet the specifications for full frontal/passport photos as stated on the US Department of State website:

- In color
- Printed on matte or glossy photo quality paper
- 2 x 2 inches (51 x 51 mm) in size
- Sized such that the head is between 1 inch and 1 3/8 inches (between 25 and 35 mm) from the bottom of the chin to the top of the head.
- Taken in front of a plain white or off-white background
- Taken in full-face view directly facing the camera
- With a neutral facial expression and both eyes open
- Taken in clothing that you normally wear on a daily basis:
  - Uniforms, clothing that looks like a uniform, and camouflage attire should not be worn in photos except in the case of religious attire that is worn daily.
  - You may only wear a hat or head covering if you wear it daily for religious purposes. Your full face must be visible and your head covering cannot obscure your hairline or cast shadows on your face.
  - Headphones, wireless hands-free devices or similar items are not acceptable in your photo.
  - If you normally wear prescription glasses, a hearing device or similar articles, they may be worn for your photo. Glare on glasses is not acceptable in your photo.
  - Dark glasses or non-prescription glasses with tinted lenses are not acceptable unless you need them for medical reasons (a medical certificate may be required).

For more information on photo standards visit the Department for State website at http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html
INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING FORM I-765
(Application for Employment Authorization)

• Check the box next to “Permission to accept employment”

• #3 – The address listed on Form I-765 must be your local address (as reported in the SEVIS database). If you move after filing Form I-765, contact an international student advisor at the Center for International Education as soon as possible. An advisor will advise you on the best way of notifying the Service Center of your change of address. The U.S. Postal Service will not forward your mail from USCIS.

• #10 -- I-94 Number. The I-94 number is found on the white I-94 card in your passport or on the electronic printout obtained via www.cbp.gov/I94. It is composed of 11 digits.

• #12 & #13-- Dates and Place of last entry should be indicated on your most recent I-94, or Entry Stamp in passport.

• #16 -- Enter one of the following:

1. (c) (3) (A) for Pre-completion Optional Practical Training.
2. (c) (3) (B) for Post-completion Optional Practical Training.
3. (c) (3) (C) for 24-month extension for STEM students (students with a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics)

• #17 If you are applying for Pre-completion or Post-completion and not the 24 month extension, please leave this section blank.

• #18 - Leave blank

• SIGNATURE- IMPORTANT- PLEASE READ-Make sure you sign the I-765 without touching the signature line or the wording above the signature space on the form. Do not touch the line or any of the wording with any part of your signature. Your signature is scanned from the form for your Employment Authorization Document, and if the signature is too big for scanning, your application could be returned to you (causing a delay).

• Please include your daytime telephone number
Academic Advisor Recommendation for
OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING

To: Academic Advisor(s)

From: Center for International Education

Re: Optional practical training for students in F-1 status

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) permits an international student under certain circumstances to apply for employment authorization in his/her field of study. This employment opportunity is in conjunction with successful progress and/or completion of a student’s academic program.

Before our office can recommend a student for this employment benefit, we must confirm the student's anticipated degree completion date. Therefore, we are asking for your assistance in reviewing the student's academic record and completing the information below. If you have any questions about optional practical training and/or the use of this form, you may contact the Center for International Education at (510) 885-2880.

Mr. /Ms. _______________________________ (________________________) is currently pursuing the following degree program:_____________________________.

The following components are a requirement of this student's program. Please indicate below which components are required for this student's program. Please provide the date (quarter of completion) when the student has completed or intends to complete each component. If the component listed is not a requirement, please mark "N/A." (FYI: This Immigration benefit of Optional Practical Training is based on the actual degree completion date, not the actual graduation date)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Quarter of Completion</th>
<th>Advisor’s Name</th>
<th>Signature and Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coursework in major(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education coursework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Undergraduate Student Only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Skills Requirement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis or Comprehensive Exam(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Graduate Student Only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please explain)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BELOW TABLE MUST BE COMPLETED BY ACADEMIC ADVISOR, NOT THE STUDENT!
Optional Practical Training
Dates Requested

I, ______________________________ would like to request the following dates for my Optional Practical Training. I understand that these dates might be altered/ changed by USCIS. I also understand that once my application is recommended in SEVIS by an international student advisor, it may be impossible to change or cancel.

Preferred Beginning Date: _______________ Ending Date: _______________

OPT Reporting Requirements

I understand that I am not allowed more then 90 days of unemployment from the start date of my EAD card. I must report the following information to CIE within 10 days of any change and within the first 90 days in order to maintain an ACTIVE SEVIS record. I understand that if no employment information is received within 90 days, SEVIS may automatically terminate my SEVIS record and I will have no legal presence in the USA.

I must report the following either by email to CIE (cie@csueastbay.edu)

- Full Name
- NETID and SEVIS number
- Current Residential Address
- Phone number
- Personal Email address
- Employer (company) name and full address, including zip code
- Job Title
- Employment Start Date
- Full time or Part Time
- Employer EIN (Employer Indentification Number)- if available
- 2 sentence description to how the job is related to your major
- Previous OPT employment end date
- Copy of EAD card

Student’s Name: _______________________________ Net ID: ____________

Today’s Date: ___________ Signature: ______________________________

Personal Email: ___________________________________________________